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THE BIZARRE. THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME



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THE VISITANT**

by ARTHUR J. BURKS

●  
**PORTRAITS  
BY JACOB  
PITT**

by STEVEN LOTT

●  
Dr. Muncing in

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THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GROSS

Volume 5

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**Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor**

MAGAZINE OF HORROR, Vol. 5, No. 5, September 1969 (whole number 29). Published bimonthly by Heath Knowledge, Inc. Executive and editorial offices at 140 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y. 10011. Single copy 50c. Annual subscription (\$ 6 issues) \$2.50 in the U. S., Canada, and Pan American Union. Foreign, \$3.00. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage. All payments for accepted contributions are made on publication. Copyright © 1969 by Heath Knowledge, Inc. All rights reserved under Universal International and Pan American copyright conventions. Printed in U. S. A.

# The Editor's Page

In the course of his discussion about elements in the writings of Edgar Rice Burroughs which would appear offensive to many of today's readers (see *Inquisitions* for a review of the book), Richard A. Lupoff says, in part: "I will myself take the credit or the blame for excluding several vicious anti-Negro slurs from the 1963 Canaveral edition of *Tarzan and the Tarzan Twins*, with the permission and approval of ERB Inc. The book is specifically intended for children's reading, the theoretical justification for censorship being, in this case, that the critical faculties of children are not sufficiently developed to reject such prejudicial material.

"Still, the act was performed with a second and, in truth, a third thought. And to this day I am not totally convinced that I did the right thing. It is one thing to ask a contemporary author to alter an unpublished work still in manuscript, or a published one for a new edition. It is another matter altogether to alter the works of a deceased author.

"More importantly, if one once admits the principle of censorship there is little telling where the censorship will stop . . ." And he continues this thought with the matter of anti-Jewish, anti-German, anti-Arab, anti-Mexican, and anti-Japanese slurs in ERB's stories, as well as comments upon the future course of nations, which at any moment might be embarrassing to the current relation-

ships of the United States with a given nation at any particular time.

This raises two important questions: the matter of racism in tales of yesteryear, and the question of censorship at any time, under any conditions.

Let's consider, first, the matter of racism. The word is used so loosely these days as to have become little more than a synonym for "bad" or "something I disagree with" or "something I don't like". It has become a signal word, to which hearers are expected to present a signal reaction without thinking; and failure to do so—or, in some instances, so much as questioning whether the word applies in the particular instance—brands the non-reactor as a "racist". "Racists", of course, are to be considered as enemies of humanity and not to be treated either with respect or consideration; and above all, not to be listened to; they are in effect to be treated as monsters, not human beings with civil rights. In short, the "racist" is to be responded to in a racist manner.

For racism, essentially, is that attitude which makes a person's race the most important thing about that person, and at times, the only thing about him to be considered. There is no so-called race which has not, or does not, contain a percentage of intensely loathsome individuals, and perhaps a larger percentage of individuals bearing one or more (but

not necessarily all) of the traits to be noted in the most intensely unattractive specimens. The racist orientation is to make the most intense, loathsome individual the prototype for the entire race, and then say, "All Jews, Negroes, Mexicans, Japanese, Catholics, Moslems, etc., are like this, even if they may not look as vile on the surface as our prototype." The prototype looks repulsive, according to the racist's proclaimed standards of attractiveness; however, an attractive appearance on the part of an individual is not to be credited to the individual: being a member of the despised race (or nation) he's even more dangerous because he doesn't look so awful.

The "racist orientation" I'm talking about does not, you see, apply only to so-called races; it applies to any group which the racist-type thinker wants it to: It can be a group sharing a common race, color, culture, national origin, religion, political preference, or any other criterion whatsoever. Thus, according to this definition, there are large numbers of people who are certainly not racists so far as their attitudes toward Negroes, etc., go but who nonetheless behave in a racist manner toward other persons or groups of whom they disapprove.

Edgar Rice Burroughs was not a racist.

Yet, it is true, that you will find many things in his stories—particularly when taken out of context, but sometimes within the context as well—which can only be considered as defamatory to a group of people rather than just to one particular individual, or a much larger mass

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than any particular group presently referred to.

What is it, then, that he is doing?

He's doing pretty much the same thing that nearly all writers—certainly nearly all writers of "pulp" or other popular fiction—were doing at the time, and earlier: he is using stereotypes rather than examining individuals. As Lupoff says, "And in the leading works of that day, 'natives' of virtually any sort were treated as stupid but sly, superstitious, filthy, lustful, greedy, and so on for a long list of pejoratives. Similarly Jews were cheap, greedy, sly, treacherous; Irish were ruddy, jolly, stupid perhaps, but good-natured and willing; English were noble, courageous, intelligent, in short paragons of virtue . . . unless they were of a certain element of the upper crust (not the true-blue Claytons, though) who were loppish, staidified, timid; and so on." (Author's ellipses.)

These were conventional stereotype attitudes, and nearly everyone in Burroughs' generation—and in mine, too, for that matter—grew up among them. The danger of stereotype attitudes is, of course, the danger of accepting such high order abstractions and generalities and applying them in specific judgments without looking to see whether they really are true of this particular person. And the person who habitually "thinks" in this manner is in danger of being misled very easily by genuine racist propaganda.

Both racist type propaganda and stereotype presentation can work just as easily in favor of something as against something. "White, good; black bad", for example, is no more

malignant a proposition than "Black, good; white bad".

But what, you may ask, is the difference between racist and stereotyped thinking, or a work of fiction which contains stereotypes and one which is filled with racist expressions?

There is a very fundamental difference: Stereotype thinking allows for exceptions, and, more important, leaves the person caught up in it some measure of freedom to learn from experience that the stereotype is incorrect; racist type thinking allows for no exceptions whatsoever, and is held with the zeal of a person who knows that he has received the Eternal Truth once and for all.

If Edgar Rice Burroughs had been a racist, with Negroes as the chosen devils, then you would never find a single likeable Negro in his stories. If you read with care, you find quite a number of them.

If Tarzan were a racist, again with Negroes as the devil, then he would treat every Negro he encounters in every story as a vile enemy to be destroyed as soon as possible. On the contrary, Tarzan, while holding a low opinion of "civilized" humanity in general—another stereotype reaction—treats every Negro as the person he finds him.

Tarzan's particular stereotype thinking applies to humanity, and especially civilized humanity as a whole. So while he is ready to believe a bad report about a particular person or group he has not met, and proceed as if they are likely to be dangerous to him, the color of the skin, the national or religious background, etc. is not something to consider. And he is alert for any

(Turn To Page 120)

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# The Case Of The Sinister Shape

by Gordon MacCreagh\*

(author of *Doctor Muncing, Exorcist*)

What had drawn Dr. Muncing to Ocean City, when he was planning to take his vacation somewhere else? "What?" was the right question, for in the terror-stricken atmosphere of this hotel he found his old foe, an unleashed thing of hate.

DR. MUNCING STEPPED OUT OF an early morning train in the chill, salty dawn of Ocean City and shivered with an ill premonition. He did not know why he had come. He had been planning to take a vacation somewhere else; but something had impelled him to change his plans and come to Ocean City instead. It was an uncomfortable urge of something pressing; Dr. Muncing shook himself and looked around him.



Solicitous hotel runners in goldlettered caps recited the scenic and culinary merits of their respective hostelrys. The doctor looked at them without the least interest, undecided.

A name caught his eye: Hotel Bathurst. The broad gold letters were just the slightest bit tarnished, and the man the vaguest trifle less spruce than his rivals, but something made Dr. Muncing feel that Bathurst was the hotel he wanted.

Some *thing* again. The letters were all wrong: that "BA" combination and the fourth letter "H", the eighth in the alphabet. He didn't like it. He didn't particularly like the strong impulse that attracted him to it.

It was not a comfortable impulse; not just a vague hunch. It was a distinct urge that impelled him, an insistent influence against his will that drew him on—feeling wholly unpleasant. He might have resisted it, of course, but much of Dr. Muncing's success in his work of battle against the more evil things of the borderland was of necessity a result of acting upon impulses. With quick decision he gave his bag to the man and followed him to the car.

Short questions during the drive elicited the information that the Bathurst was a hotel patronized mostly by the theatrical profession. None of that offered any clue to the impulse; Dr. Muncing wondered darkly.

The premonition of unpleasantness received quick impetus upon his arrival at the hotel. In spite of the early hour a scurrying and a confusion was in the lobby. Bellhops hurried aimlessly, doing nothing; a few wide-eyed guests, showing evidences of having dressed hastily, whispered in groups.

Words such as "horrible . . . fearsome . . . the most frightful sound I ever heard in my life . . ." passed in shuddering agreement.

A large, very blonde lady behind the desk wrung her plump white hand distractedly and moaned: "That it should happen in my house! My God, why must it happen to me?"

A car roared up to the door and a hurly man with a brusque and officious manner entered. "Where is it?" he asked importantly.

A dozen voices told him eagerly: "Fourth floor. Room forty-eight."

Four and eight again. Dr. Muncing was always quick in decision; he stepped up to the man and handed him his card on which was inscribed, *Dr. Muncing, Exorcist*.

The man glanced at it. The title, *doctor*, caught his eye. The last word was unfamiliar in his business of extracting the solid facts out of

material mysteries; but this was no time to bother. He grunted satisfaction.

"Good. Better come along, Doc. I couldn't connect with our own man this early; had to leave a call for him. All right, boy; shoot her up."

On the fourth floor frightened faces peered from doorways. A woman huddled in a chair at the floor desk, rocking with her head buried in her arms while her body shook in great hysterical sobs. The elevator boy pointed dumbly in the direction of room forty-eight.

The plainclothesman strode briskly down the corridor. Over his shoulder he said: "Phone call said the whole floor was awakened by a frightful scream and the floor clerk rushed to the room and found a guy laid out all twisted on the bed. Something about a tall thin feller and the window too. Sounded foolish; but we'll get the woman in as soon as we've had a look around."

While scared faces stared at him in horrid fascination he pushed open the door with professional callousness and entered, Dr. Muncing on his heels.

The window shade kept the room unpleasantly gloomy; but there was plenty enough light to see an emaciated figure in pajamas on the bed, twisted, as the floor clerk said, in a hideous contortion.

The detective grunted. "Huh. Don't need a physician to tell me that this one is out. But look at him anyhow, Doc."

While Dr. Muncing made quick tests for any possible lingering life, the other with trained eyes took in all details of the room. He shot the window shade up with a whir and let in the early daylight. The window sash was open. The man leaned out and made critical note of the outside distances. He came back to the bed and looked at the body.

"What's the verdict, Doc?"

Dr. Muncing's face was darkly serious. "Quite dead of course. There's not an external mark on him, but every bone in his body seems to be broken; smashed small from the inside."

The detective scowled and his eyes swept the room rapidly once more. "Huh—that's a funny one. Not a mark on him; nothing upset; no furniture broken; no signs of a fight; nothing. A body tied in a knot like it had been done with a derrick, and an open window. But, what the heck, there's nothing human could get out there. Let's call that woman in."

Dr. Muncing nodded; but mechanically. He stood with head high, his strong black brows drawn together in a frown, nostrils wide and twitching, as though sniffing. He was feeling, sensing, trying desperately

to catch some vague aura or impression that remained in the room. The impression was uncomfortable; more than that, evil and menacing.

He went to the window, as the detective had done, and looked out. The wall was sheer. No projections, no ledges or roofs. He measured with his eye the distances to adjoining windows. He drew his head in again, nodding darkly with thin lips sucked in a tight line.

Outside the door was the detective's voice, not unkind but determined. "Come along, my girl. Nothing's going to hurt you. I don't want to make it hard, but we've got to have your description. Hey, Doc; cover it up, will you? This dame's got the horrors."

He pushed the floor clerk before him. "Now about this man you say you saw. Tell me exactly where and how he stood."

The woman came in, twining convulsed fingers round a moist handkerchief and biting her lip to control hysteria. She cast a shuddering glance towards the bed; and, finding to her relief that the twisted form upon it was decently covered, she controlled herself sufficiently to stammer her tale.

"I—I was reading at the desk there—I wasn't asleep. Suddenly I heard the scream. It was—God have mercy, it was the most horrible noise I've ever dreamed in a nightmare. I ran to the door and knocked. There was no answer. I—the knob turned to my hand and I looked in, and—"

Shudders choked her words and she covered her face with her hands. Dr. Muncing quickly put his arm about her shoulders and spoke soothingly.

"Don't tell us about the man on the bed. Don't think of that. Just tell us about the other one."

The woman sensed protection in the muscular arm, and understanding in the voice. She got a grip on her nerves.

"He was—it wasn't quite daylight yet; the room was dim. All I could see was a very tall man—not his face. Only his shape—my God, his frightful shape. It was that that frightened me more than—than that other. I don't know why; but it was somehow horrible. Just the shape. Dark and thin and frightfully tall. He—it seemed to reach the window in one stride and it pulled aside the shade and stepped out. Just like that. All elbows and knees and then it was gone. Then I—I screamed and other people came from their rooms."

"Let's get this straight," snapped the detective. "Other people came. Did they come at once? They'd be witnesses that nobody came out of this room. That's important, because no human person could go out of

that window. It would take an eight-foot man with a ten-foot reach to touch the next window sill. I tell you nothing human could get out of that window."

Dr. Muncing nodded. "You are right, Officer. Nothing human. Still—" He pointed with his eyes at the shrouded huddle on the bed.

The detective frowned. His voice was dubious. "I've got to look into ropeladder possibilities; though I'd say that's out from the start. A rope against three floors of lower windows would make quite a racket. Still, that tied-up knot isn't normal. Something must have killed him."

Dr. Muncing nodded agreement again. Very softly and full of dark meaning, he said: "You are very right again, Officer. Some *thing* quite surely killed him."

The detective looked at him, his eyes dilating. "What d'you mean? What weird stuff are you driving at, Doc?"

Dr. Muncing shook his head. "I don't know, Officer. I don't know—yet. There are more horrible things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your police records. You go ahead on your own methods. I'd like to verify from your coroner's autopsy my opinion that there was nothing organically wrong with this man. Still, I'll bet that he has been sick for some days and I'll bet that his doctor has never found the trouble in all his medical books. I must go and see that man if I can possibly get his address from the office."

The detective scowled reflectively and lit a cigarette to conceal an uneasiness that came over him.

"You're a cheerful one, Doc, to have on a murder case. You give me the willies with your unholy talk. If this guy has had a doctor, like you say, I guess I'll come along with you and talk to him. I want to know what kind of sickness ties a man up into that kind of a knot."

2

THE PHYSICIAN WHO HAD BEEN ATTENDING the sick man, a Dr. Perkins, turned out to be an alert-eyed little man with the inquiring manner and quick movements of a bird. He was momentarily shocked to hear of his patient's horrible and sudden death. Then he shrugged.

"I suppose one should call it a tragedy; but it was, after all, only a hastening of what seemed to be inevitable. Whatever was the matter with him was more than my poor skill could fathom."

"So I thought," said Dr. Muncing. "You found nothing organically wrong?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. It was the most perplexing case of all my experience as a general practitioner. There was nothing wrong with the man; I'll stake my reputation on that. He was just wasting away and he responded to no treatment. Something was sapping his vitality." Dr. Muncing assented soberly. "Quite right, Doctor. Without any manner of doubt, some *thing*."

The detective exploded. "There you go again, hinting at devilries of some kind. Come across, Doc. What have you got up your sleeve? I'm not one of those know-it-all sleuths of the story magazines, even if I did make sergeant; I'm not above taking a hint from anybody. Let me in on your dope."

Dr. Muncing held up his hand. His compelling eyes held the other.

"One minute, Sergeant. The doctor here has verified just what I guessed. Take the phone and verify one more guess, will you, while I ask the doctor a few more questions; and then I'll tell you all I know. Call up the hotel and ask if there aren't some more sick people."

The detective stepped into the hall where the telephone was and the mumbling of his voice into the mouthpiece came to the two men while Dr. Muncing asked questions. Suddenly the voice came loud in a startled exclamation.

"By Cripes!" and then. "The hell you say!"

The man came back to stare at Dr. Muncing with dilated eyes. Thickly he said: "You're a wizard, Doc, and there's hellishness afoot somewhere. There's two other sick ones; and neither do their doctors know what they've got. And there's a maid on the top floor out of her mind and moaning about a horrible tall dark thing."

Dr. Muncing sprang to his feet. Flinging a quick thanks to Dr. Perkins, he caught the detective by the arm and hurried him to the street. There he hailed a taxi and pushed the detective in. The latter obeyed without resistance; he realized he was following knowledge greater than his own. In the taxi Dr. Muncing rapidly explained the outlines of what he guessed and the rudiments of the darker mysteries of life. He found no difficulty in reducing many years of occult study in many countries down to a few lucid details. Muncing's work was so unusual and so few people knew anything about it, that he was constantly called upon to explain.

"We have no time to go into history or abstruse arguments," said Dr. Muncing. "You accept the findings of expert criminologists as prob-

able truth. You will take the word of another detective on things that you may not be familiar with yourself. Well, I am a ghost detective.

"No, don't interrupt. Let me tell you what I know; and later, perhaps — if we get out of this alive — we can argue.

"I don't have to tell you that what you call ghosts do exist. Most people — though they like to pooh-pooh such things — have an inherent feeling that they might meet a ghost some time in a dark place. You probably have your own superstitions.

"Well, they are not superstitions. They are hereditary memories. Our forefathers knew a great deal about spirit life that we have drowned in modern materialism. Oriental people still know a great deal.

"What most people do not know is that there exist many distinct forms of spirit life and that they function each according to their attributes. Some forms are well disposed to human life; some are harmless; some are malignant.

"We have to deal here with a malignant form. From its action I judge it to be an elemental. Elementals are primal earth forces — formless, eyedless, faceless. You will understand them perhaps by applying the great truth of evolution to all things. Elements are spirit forms that have just not evolved at all. They exist, where shall I say? For want of a better word; they exist along with various other spirit forms on the other side of the veil that divides spirit from man.

"Sometimes it becomes possible for a spirit form to break through the veil and to manifest itself on the human plane. Never mind how they break through. They are attracted in various ways. In order to break through they must first be attracted by humans, consciously or unconsciously. The vibration theory may account for some. When they do break through we, in popular language, see a ghost.

"All elementals, possibly on account of their inferiority, hate humans who have progressed further in the scale of evolution. Having broken through into the human plane, an elemental must continue to draw sustenance from humans in order to continue to manifest. It can establish contact with some human who is sick, weak, whose power of resistance is at a low ebb. Thereafter it continues to draw vitality from its victim just as the vampire draws its sustenance in blood — till there is no vitality left.

"That in itself is bad enough. But the human victim, robbed of all vitality, does not quietly die, as do vampire victims. For the elemental, finding its victim useless, vents all its hate upon him by rending the last of life from him with a vicious force, and then casts the twisted shell

of what once was a man aside and turns to find another victim in a favorable condition of low resistance."

The detective had listened with wide eyes, knuckles showing white where his hands gripped his knee. These things sounded fantastically impossible; but Dr. Muncing's cold enunciation of them forced a reluctant belief in their gruesome possibility. And there was the evidence of the broken, twisted body and the telephone addenda from the hotel. All of them, things normally inexplicable.

The detective drew a long, tremulous breath and then fired what he thought was a poser.

"If this thing is a spook—which I don't admit yet—what brought it here? I thought that spooks hung around in old houses, monasteries, and places where there'd been murders."

Dr. Muncing was able to laugh happily. "There you are. Your own established superstitions. Why do you believe that? Because your forefathers knew it; because it is history; because people still know it. But make no mistake. While some forms of spirit life are attracted to their associations in old houses, others—elementals—are attracted directly to humans; they can fasten on to them wherever they may live."

The doctor had a desperately logical answer to every doubt. The detective propounded another—not a doubt this time; a question looking for information.

"And this spook thing, can it hurt other people, too; people who aren't sick? Us?"

Dr. Muncing nodded seriously. "Under the right conditions, yes. Conditions in the Bathurst are right. If it has established contact with three victims its power may be immense."

"What do you figure brought it to the Bathurst?"

"I don't know," replied the doctor. "Maybe the number combinations of its name opened the way. There are depths in numerology that no man has fathomed. Maybe its victim did or thought or possessed some luckless thing, to attract it. Maybe just the fact that there were three prospects whose physical vibrations provided the right sort of non-resistance was sufficient.

"These are things that I do not know. I can do no more than guess in the dark. I do not know how this malignant entity was able to exert some queer force that impelled me, personally, to come here. But from that I deduce that I have had contact with this elemental evil before. It has reason to hate me more than all other humans; and it has drawn me to this place because it feels it has contacted with something or other,

with some new power, that will enable it to destroy me. I don't know yet what this power may be or just how the thing has been able to exert it from a distance. But I feel positive that the whole plan of campaign is aimed at me."

The doctor stated his case with cold conviction. No exaggeration, no assumption of knowledge that he did not possess, no heroics. Here was something at last that the detective could understand: a force for evil directed deliberately against an individual who stood for law and order. It was a condition that he himself had faced many a time. And the doctor faced the condition calmly, without hint of hesitation, just as any officer of the law might.

There was inspiration in that attitude. The detective braced himself. It had been the dark unknown that had seemed so horrible. Now he felt that he knew quite a good deal about the ways of spooks. He shrugged.

"Well, it sounds like a lot of hokey to me, Doc, but you got your nerve all right. And I'm assigned to clear up this murder, so I'll throw in with you. Let me just phone headquarters to send a man to look up marks around the window and fingerprints; and then we'll take a look at this maid that's gone queer on the top floor."

## 3

UPON ARRIVAL AT THE HOTEL they found a physician already in attendance upon the maid. She had been moved to a bed in a vacant room, and there she lay in a state of collapse, moaning incoherent things and rolling staring eyes that saw nothing.

The physician was quite at a loss. "There's not a thing the matter with the girl," he told them. "No hurt of any kind. But there seems to be some awful fright. All she does is mutter something about a horrible shape."

Dr. Muncing nodded. "Do what you can. We'll be back."

He drew the detective away. "There'll be attics above this top floor; trap-door entrances. That's where we must look. And listen—get this very straight because you'll need to know just what you are up against. This is no empty shadow that groans and rattles chains. It has drawn human vitality sufficient to materialize in exaggerated resemblance to the human form from which it has taken that vitality. By the process of multiplication of energy known to all spirit forms it has built up that energy to a force sufficient to tear you and me apart. Few spirit



forms can face bright light. Therefore this thing will be lurking through the day in dark places; attics."

The detective heaved up his shoulders in a great shrug. "If I believed the half of what you told me, Doc, I'd be taking cover faster than from a gang with machine guns. But I'm with you; so you know just about what I think."

At the end of that long hallway, rungs let into the wall led to a square trap above. Dr. Muncing waited, with a grim little smile. The detective was quick to catch on to his motive. He grinned at him.

"You haven't got me scared yet, buddy," he grunted; and he slowly climbed the ladder. With a thrust of his burly shoulders he flung the trap door back and disappeared into the gloomy hole.

Dr. Muncing deliberately waited below. He heard the man's heavy footsteps move in a small circle above. Still he waited. It was being alone in the dark that tried a man's unbelief in ghosts. Suddenly the detective's voice came. "Doc. Hey Doc."

Within the second it came again; urgent, anxious. "Hey Doc. Come on up!"

In a flash Dr. Muncing was up the ladder and beside the man. It was he who was grinning now, though rather thinly and without mirth.

The detective drew a shaky breath. His face was sheepish and had by this time lost all of its gruff assurance. "By golly I—I guess I'm a fool. For a minute there I was getting rattled. But—there's something up here, Doc."

Dr. Muncing laughed shortly. "So? You felt it, did you?"

"Felt what? If I'd felt anything I'd have taken a crack at it. What'd you think I felt?"

Dr. Muncing was uncompromising. "Fear," he said. "Just the first swift stab of it—and you haven't seen the thing yet. I told you fear was one of its attributes. You'll have to hold your nerve with an iron grip because this thing knows how to wrench out the very roots of fear."

The detective's voice came very soberly. "By golly, Doc, you've almost got me believing you. There was something getting my goat. But—I'm with you."

"Good man," said Dr. Muncing. "Let's take a look around."

The attic space in which they stood was a long, wide barrack of a place. Dim light filtered through a cobwebby louver opening. Ghostly gray BX electric cable wandered snakily over the open ceiling beams. The peaked roof shingles were lost in the gloom above. Only a track of three planks made walking space down the middle of the empty area.

A false step on either side and one's foot would plunge through the ceiling of the room below.

At the far end another dim ventilation louver showed that the attic extended on both sides. Apparently it was all like that, a dusty, musty, emptiness of king posts and cross beams that covered the whole building, which was constructed with wings and a center, like a letter E.

"Helluva place to go spook hunting," grumbled the detective.

Dr. Muncing said nothing, but advanced slowly, the detective as close to his side as the narrow plank track would allow. In the gloomier central portion barely lit from the dim ends the doctor was very cautious. A faint metallic clink in his pocket told that he had handled something. If overwrought imaginations were not building figments out of nothing, soft echoes and vague scuffling noises indicated that something was moving somewhere.

"We've got to be sure," said the doctor, "that it is up here and that it is it."

They advanced together cautiously. Arrived at the end, the detective fastened a spasmodic grip on the doctor's arm. "There! By God, I'll swear I saw something duck round the far corner."

"Come on," said the doctor shortly.

Both men felt a tingling of their skin as they started forward. The detective pressed on. Having seen something, all his training as a man-hunter came to the fore. He reached that corner ahead of the doctor. With a sudden shout he snatched his pistol and fired into the further darkness.

Nothing happened. Then in a few seconds—almost as though it were a foul odor given off by some beast of the skunk family—a hot wave of hate swept back and eddied round them. It was a sensation almost solid. They could feel the furious malice of the thing. A chill ran along the detective's spine.

"That was foolish," said Dr. Muncing quietly. "You can't shoot a ghost. But I knew you had your gun; otherwise I would never have brought you up here."

"God of Heaven!" breathed the detective. "I take it all back, Doc. I don't know what I saw, but it was a long and a fearful shape of something. And what use is a gun then, if you can't shoot a thing like that?"

Dr. Muncing nodded. "The sinister shape that frightened the women to hysteria. You're beginning to believe, yes? But listen now again. You've got to know this. It is a law of the universe that to every natural

ill Nature has provided an antidote. We don't know all the antidotes; but science is continually finding more of them.

"There are repellants as well as attractions for all spirit forms. The old timers practised a mumbo-jumbo and called it magic. Rubbish. There is no such thing as magic. They knew some of the rules, that's all.

"The repellant for an elemental is—cold iron. I don't know why, but it has been known for all the ages. The amulets of all Oriental peoples—who know a lot more than we do—are made of cold iron. Your lucky horseshoe is cold iron. The material of which your gun is made is a thousand times better safeguard here than all your bullets. Better still is natural iron; the antidote to the primal earth spirit as Nature primally made it. Best of all, because of its purest natural form, is meteoric iron. An elemental can approach cold iron only in circumstances of extraordinary power. Now come ahead."

Quickly they traversed that passage and came to what would correspond to the lower arm of the E. A blind passage. If the thing were here at all they had it cornered.

"It can't go through that ventilation louver," whispered Dr. Muncing. "I mean, it could squeeze through the slats, but it can't face daylight. Come on."

It was a foolish, in fact a quite stupid, advance to make, as Dr. Muncing perfectly well recognized afterwards. That louver was particularly cobwebby and dim. The corner was dark. The elemental malignance had been drawing power from no less than three sick persons. And lastly—a law which the doctor well knew—anything cornered instantly builds up a psychological increase of power.

With perfectly insane recklessness, however, he advanced along the narrow plank track, over the open ceiling beams, the detective sublime in his ignorance, with him.

Like an offensive odor again heavy hate assailed them, tangible, almost stifling. The gloom in the far corner became gloomier. Long, black shadows of beams threw patterns. If the thing were there it was indistinguishable amongst the other shadows.

Under ordinary circumstances Dr. Muncing would have taken warning right there. The sheer overwhelming force of the hate projection was evidence of the power that the thing had been able to gather to itself. But in some amazing manner he seemed to have lost all caution. Not only caution but simple common sense was lacking. The detective, bold in his ignorance, followed the lead of the expert. But he felt the menace of the thing.

"By God," he muttered hoarsely. "I'll swear it's getting darker."

And it was. A blackness in the corner thickened and seemed to bulge out at them. Malignance, almost triumphal, swirled about them. Then fear in a sudden rush clutched at their senses, like an animate intelligence tearing to break down their resistance.

At that at last Dr. Muncing felt that he had come too far; that he had pitted himself against a condition of power far greater than he had realized. He knew that he had come just where the thing wanted him.

A desperate thought of retreat came to him, but it was a long passage back over the narrow and insecure planks. Then fear in an overwhelming surge tore his grip of himself to shreds of frazzled, screaming nerves. A choked cry of hideous panic came from the detective; and with it the horror broke upon them.

The shadow towered up before them: a palpable, monstrous, deformed thing. An inhuman noise issued from it; a ululation of hell's triumph. The unleashed malignance of all the ages enveloped them, and the *thing* launched itself at them.

Both men agreed afterwards that at that moment they saw their own spirits apart from themselves, torn from them and whirled in a strong wind.

The detective's shout was a strangled groan. With desperate effort he hurled himself aside—any side, anywhere. His heavy body struck violently against the door.

Together the two bodies came down. There was a smashing sound. Wood splintered. Plaster cracked. The bright light of God's good day broke blindingly upon them. A short, swift descent, and a thud. They had smashed through the lath and plaster ceiling into the room below.

Above them, through the jagged hole, sounded a noise like beasts snarling in rage. Angular concentrates of darkness moved furiously in the gloom, as though long arms struggled to reach them; the more furious because they could not face the bright light. Like a stench again, consuming hate settled down upon them. Then slowly the malignance ebbed from the opening.

Both men were badly shaken; death had been terrifyingly close to them. They were bruised and the breath had been knocked out of them, but their shock was mental much more than physical. The terror of that primal evil in the thick dark still shook them.

The room through the ceiling of which they had mercifully broken happened to be untenanted. Dr. Muncing pulled himself together with a



(Illustration by Amos Sewall)

strong effort. He dragged himself to the plaster-littered bed and sat with his head in his hands.

With the sudden fall and the plunge into bright daylight, common sense had come back to him. The thread of some queer influence had snapped. His mind grappled with the phenomenon of his so nearly fatal stupidity.

"How could it do it?" he kept asking himself. "I should have known—I *did* know, that it had a tremendous store of power. I knew that conditions were just right for it. What lunacy made me walk right into its trap? How did it influence me to come here in the first place? An elemental in itself is of too low an order of intelligence to influence the human mind. That rule is absolute. What new and deadly trick is this?"

The detective was concerned with a more practical aspect of the case. His heavy, ruddy face was white and great drops of perspiration clung to his forehead.

"Blessed saints!" he kept muttering. "I don't know what I've seen nor what black section of hell has broken out and come to this house. But God help us, what's to do? What can mortal man do against a thing like that? Fifty cops couldn't fight that thing. Save us—is it safe anyway to sit under that hole where it can look at us?"

Dr. Muncing shook himself out of his uneasy consideration upon the new menace of mental influence. The detective was right: Practical considerations were paramount; precautions had to be taken.

"It can't come at us in the light," he assured the detective. "All the police in the world wouldn't be any good. They *might* be able to chase it out of here, but it would be loose somewhere else in the world and would find another victim. We can't destroy it. It is a spirit form and so cannot be killed."

The awfulness of the thought shook the detective. "Is it a piece of everlasting hell itself? What can we do?"

"The only thing we can do is to starve it. By the merciful dispensation of Providence the thing has its limitations, just like everything else. It has made its contacts and has materialized. In order to continue to manifest on this material plane it *must* continue to draw energy from its victims. It must eat.

"We must cut off its supply. We must protect its two remaining victims from further drain upon their vitality—by cold iron on their persons; and their rooms must be kept brilliantly lit throughout the night. We must bar all exits to the attic with cold iron; the louver openings; everything. That won't be difficult. Stove lids, gas piping, anything will do.

"Fortunately the thing cannot easily break through the natural resistance of people who are not sick, whose vitality is strong. In fact it seems that there are only certain people whose vital vibrations are right for it; with whom it can establish contact. Every day—or rather night—that it cannot renew its supply of human vitality it grows weaker. Till shortly it will not have power enough to materialize at all. It will be forced back to spirit form, to the limbo from which it came.

"That is the only way we can deal with it. We *must* so deal with it; otherwise it will remain a curse at large in the world."

With a material job in hand the detective was full of energy. Full,

too, of an almost religious obsession as to the need of driving this unholy thing back to the nether pit.

"I'll fix that end of it, Doc," he declared, with a crusader's spirit. "Leave it to me. I'll have things fixed up in no time. No need to tell the hotel folks what it's all about. I'll just say the police are in charge."

"By no means tell anybody," said the doctor. "Fear engenders vibrations favorable to occult forces. I shall go and see these two sick people and try to make them understand what we want to do without scaring them."

## 4

AT THE HOTEL DESK THE DOCTOR INQUIRED for particulars about the two sick people who were so mysteriously sick. The large blonde lady gave garrulous details.

There was Mr. Beckett in room sixty-two who had the snappiest monologue act in vaudeville. A fine, generous gentleman he was too; and it was a shame and a disgrace that the doctors who took his good money couldn't even tell him what was wrong with him.

And there was Mr. Lubine in nineteen who used to play the two-a-day; but there was not much call for his specialty these days, and he was reduced to a come-on booth at the beach. A hypnotist he was and one of the best in—

"What? What's that?"

Dr. Muncing's sudden shout startled the lady back to her tremulous condition of the early morning. Her nerves were in no condition to bear another shock.

"A hypnotist, you say? God of everlasting wonders! What cunning guile is this?"

He hurried from the desk muttering, leaving the lady to gaze tearfully after him. A hypnotist? So that was how it was done? The malignant thing, absorbing with the man's vitality a portion of his attributes, had been able to project a hypnotic suggestion to its enemy. Dr. Muncing was sure now that this was the same elemental evil that he had combatted before. On that occasion, owing to the stupidity of others, the elemental had won; the doctor had failed to starve it out. Now it knew the danger of the doctor's profound knowledge, just as a criminal knows and fears the danger of a clever detective.

Dr. Muncing smiled a tight and very crooked smile. So that was how the thing had been able to influence his mind and had lured him

here where it had no less than three coincidental sources of power. That was how it had induced him into advancing into its lair in the face of conditions that all his knowledge told him were in its favor.

Dr. Muncing whistled and wiped his brow. He would not be caught with that trick again. And he must immediately warn the detective against that sly menace. Together they made the rounds of the top-floor halls. The various trap-doors had been guarded with immense quantities of iron. Hardware of all kinds had been nailed, screwed or attached by cords, as conditions permitted; to every possible outlet. From outside, festoons of gas pipe hung over the ventilation louver.

"And we've shoved nails and stove bolts into the mouse holes," said the detective with an official pride in this thoroughness.

Dr. Muncing told him that an elemental was no such attenuated thing that it could ooze through a mouse hole. It was a material body capable of doing material harm. They went to the patients' rooms and immunized those.

Inventing a story about a prowling gang of burglars, Dr. Muncing instructed them about keeping doors and windows closed and lights burning bright. Over the brass hardware of the doors he hung packets of meteoric iron.

"Tomorrow," he said to the detective, "we shall know whether we have missed anything. If the patients look better it will be proof that we are being successful. If they are worse—"

"Don't worry that I've overlooked anything," the detective interrupted. "If that devil spawn is anything bigger than an ant we've got him bottled in the attic."

In spite of which boast, a furious knocking woke the doctor with the first streaks of dawn, and a white-faced boy brought a story that a watchman had seen a long dark figure skulking up a staircase.

Muncing immediately investigated in company with the detective and discovered that the ironware about one of the trap-doors had been removed and stacked neatly in a corner.

"What the hell!" swore the detective. "I thought you said it couldn't touch iron."

But Dr. Muncing with a very serious expression continued his inquiries. They elicited the information that a hotel employee on one of the upper floors had moved them. He appeared to be hazy in his recollection of just why he had done so. He supposed that probably they must have looked unnecessary, as well as untidy.

The furious detective would have struck the bewildered employee.



But Dr. Muncing held his hand. "Remember," he told him meaningly. "It hypnotized us to follow it right into its den."

The detective's hand dropped. Amazement and awe were in his expression. "Holy Saints! If it can do that against our precautions—Do you think it got at the sick ones again?"

"Come on," snapped the doctor.

A hurried call at number sixty-two disclosed that everything was intact and that Mr. Becket had slept well and looked refreshed.

But the report from number nineteen was not so reassuring. Mr. Lubine lay in his bed, completely exhausted. And his window that had been so carefully protected was wide open.

Tactful, painstaking inquiry disclosed that he had been unable to sleep, it had been hot. So he had opened the window for fresh air and had turned out the glaring lights.

Dr. Muncing drew the detective out of the room. His manner was very troubled. "There are times," he murmured, "when I almost believe in a personal devil. What a diabolic jest upon life! Hypnotizing the hypnotist with his own medicine?"

"God of Mercy," groaned the detective. "What can we ever do against that damnable trick?"

"Nothing," said Dr. Muncing with flat conviction. "Nothing at all. I had hoped to starve this thing out. But as long as that man lives it will always be able to influence somebody to leave a loophole somewhere. His hypnotic art is his own death sentence; we can only hope that he does not live too long."

The detective stared at him with big eyes as he assimilated the helplessness of that thought.

## 5

THREE DAYS OF WATCHING and futile precautions passed. Always somebody somewhere was insidiously impelled to remove some carefully built barrier of cold iron. The doomed hypnotist grew horribly weaker. And then, one day just before the dawn that frightful, soul-searing scream rang throughout the hotel once more.

The detective and Dr. Muncing almost collided with each other at the door of number nineteen. Together they tore it open and dashed in. But only to verify what they already knew.

The body of the wretched hypnotist lay distorted in a gruesome contortion.

In spite of his anticipation of the tragedy, the detective was stunned by the hideous inevitability of it. But Dr. Muncing was full of grim energy; his strong nostrils quivered with the prospect of encounter and a tight smile pinched his lips.

"S-s-s-so," he hissed very softly. "The thing has been foolish enough to kill its source of supply. It has perhaps learned enough to circumvent our barriers. "But"—he nodded very purposefully—"perhaps now we can trap it."

The detective stared at him. "What do you mean, trap it? You're not going to try and catch that thing? And you can't kill it, you told me."

Grimly Dr. Muncing expol

Grimly Dr. Muncing expounded the law. "Every spirit form can be exorcised—if you know how. Every ghost, as you would put it, can disappear. A spirit form may disintegrate itself voluntarily. Or—if one has the knowledge and the necessary courage—conditions may be made so unpleasant for it that it disintegrates itself back to the other dimension. If we can catch our elemental and force it to dematerialize, it is right back where it came from—beyond the veil once more. A completely new set of conditions must be found in order to let it break through again."

"How?" was all that the detective said through set teeth.

Dr. Muncing was deadly deliberate. "Have you got plenty of plain gust? I mean, nerve enough to meet this thing in a locked room? But I know you have. You'll see it through with me? Live or die?"

The detective's eyes were held by the doctor's compelling stare. Slowly he nodded. Dr. Muncing held out his hand.

"Good man. Listen then. This thing has a low grade of intelligence. Tonight it will try to get into the other sick man's room. Well, we'll leave the road open—and you, my nervy friend, and I, we shall be waiting for it!"

Like steam slowly escaping the breath came heavily through the detective's nose. But his eyes remained fixed on Dr. Muncing's. His jaw muscles swelled over gritted teeth. He nodded.

"Good man," said Dr. Muncing tersely again. "Go ahead and arrange about having the patient moved into another room, and hang all the iron in the house around it. I've got some preparations to make yet. I've been getting ready for this for the last three days. I've got a long session now with a carpenter and an electrician. Probably a blacksmith, too. See you at ten o'clock tonight."

For the detective it was an awful day of foreboding and gloomy conjecture, a day that dragged its minutes into interminable hours. Fearsome

though the thought was of facing the elemental thing, he welcomed each new hour that led on to the evening as being one hour the less to wait in suspense.

Not a minute before ten P.M. did Dr. Muncing show up. He was tense. "Come on," he said shortly. "They turn off the main lights here at ten. We want to be in position right away."

The sick man's room was stuffy with recent occupancy and want of air. Dr. Muncing's first act was to throw the window up to its fullest extent. The detective breathed like a nervous horse, but said nothing. Laconically, Dr. Muncing outlined his plans.

"I've been having a surprise built here for the thing. That will give us an advantage—and let me tell you, we'll need it. We must just sit tight in the dark till it comes. Chairs in the corner farthest from window and bed. Not a peep, not a sound to warn it. And then, if it comes, it'll be it or us."

The detective never knew whether minutes or hours or days passed. Time was an interminable ache of apprehension. Comfortable human noises in the hotel ceased. Unfamiliar noises shuffled and whispered down passages. Probably humans too—or mice. But the detective quivered at each one. Faint clicks came from without the window. Insects or summer bats. The detective groped for Dr. Muncing's arm in the dark.

The doctor leaned softly over to whisper reassurance. "Don't bother about noises. It will be as silent as a ghost when it comes; and then whatever happens will happen fast. Hold your nerve for that minute; and then, whatever happens, don't let the iron amulet out of your hands."

Black eternity passed again. Suddenly both men drew a sharp breath at the same time. There had been no sound; but a roundish object the size of a grapefruit was dimly outlined above the window-sill. For minutes it stayed as motionless as a lurking animal: formless indistinguishable shape; a blur in the outer darkness.

At last it moved. It rose above the sill. An extraordinarily long angle of a raggy elbow heaved up from below. A gaunt shoulder followed; and then another fantastic elbow. There the thing hung in grotesque silhouette. The grapefruit thing was obviously its deformed head. It turned as though listening.

The detective experienced the same cold fear that he had at his first meeting with the thing in the attic; and again, almost as an animal odor, the sense of hate wafted into the room.

His grip closed hard on Dr. Muncing's arm. Its rocklike steadiness reassured him.

Slowly, with infinite caution the shadow drew itself over the silk; all long raggedy arms and abnormally attenuated legs. Now it stood wholly within the room; a shadow against the outer dimness, deformed, grotesque, immense.

Then things happened fast. Dr. Muncing stretched out a cautious arm and pressed a button. With a rasp and a heavy metallic clang a sliding shutter slammed down into its groove, cutting off even the dim square of outside night. The room was in black darkness.

A snarling squeaky noise sounded by the bed. A choked "My God" from the detective. Then a click; a familiar sputter; and a blaze of light from a powerful theater arc lamp.

Crouching in sudden afright the sinister shape loomed enormous in all its exaggerated deformity; menacing in spite of its startled surprise. But it was to the face of the thing that the eyes of both men were attracted: A faceless face, a smudge; a smear of moldy doughy substance, shapeless, shrunken, incredibly evil. Yet there were eyes; dead slaty gray with darker diagonal slits of irises; and a frothy gash of a mouth; a formless face of fear and of unbelievable fury.

A sound of rage issued from the mouth and the Thing hurled itself at the window through which it had come. In the same movement, like an animal arresting its leap in mid-air, it shrank from the iron sheet that had clanged into place. With inhuman speed, snarling as it twisted, it changed its leap into a plunge across the room and lunged an abnormally attenuated arm at the arc lamp.

There was a crash, a tinkle of smashed carbon rods, and the room was blotted into black darkness once more.

Out of the dark came a roaring noise, an incoherent howl of triumph. The detective felt himself whirled off his feet into the air by an irresistible force; he commended his soul to God.

Then, mercifully, there was a sputtering noise and a spurt of blue flame. Another arc blazed bright. A sputter, once more. Another. Again another. The room was flooded with light that hurt the eyes.

The detective found himself on the floor. Vaguely he was conscious of Dr. Muncing shielding his eyes from the glare and advancing with incredible courage against a shapeless blackness that condensed in a corner, holding in his hands a queer, five-sided emblem of iron.

From it and from the blinding lights the black shadow shrank. Farther into the corner and yet farther. The lights seemed to penetrate it, to eat

it up. Its solid blackness paled. It thinned out. The baseboard was visible through it; the pattern of the wall paper. Presently there was no shadow. Nothing. Only a stifling odor of baffled hate.

Dr. Muncing advanced resolutely into the corner. He pressed his pentagon of iron into the farthest nook. There he left it and he came to lift the detective to his feet. Great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. His strong hands were trembling. He hid his own agitation under a cover of brusqueness.

"What in thunder did you do with the iron amulet I told you not to let out of your hand? Dropped it to reach for your gun, huh? You poor fool, you've been nearer to horrible death than you'll ever be able to understand."

The detective was not resentful at this. "Is—is it gone?" was all he wanted to know.

Very slowly and very soberly Dr. Muncing nodded. "By the grace of God, yes. And by the grace of God again, the conditions that allow a thing like that to break through into the human world come, very fortunately, seldom. This elemental evil is exorcised; or, as you will tell the tale to your unbelieving fellows, this ghost is laid."



# Tales From Cornwall

by David H. Keller, M. D.

(author of *The Abyss*, *Heredity*, etc.)

## No. 4 The Thirty And One

Four of the Cornwall Tales appeared in *WEIRD TALES* in 1929 and 1930, and the readers regretfully decided that this was all there would be of them. I myself did not get to read any of these four until 1939, when I first managed to borrow a good-size collection of old issues of WT, prior to the dates of my own familiarity with the magazine, which began with the October 1931 issue (although I had managed to get some back issues, as far as January 1931). So it was with both surprise and pleasure that we all saw this story in the second issue of *MARVEL SCIENCE STORIES* in 1938. One more would make its initial appearance in a magazine a few years later, but I'll save comment on that one when we come to it. The next story in the book will be the one that appeared first in *WEIRD TALES*: *The Battle of the Tonds*.

CECIL, OVERLORD OF WALLING IN ARMORICA, mused by the fire. The blind Singer of Songs, sang the sagas of ancient times, waited long for praise and then, disquiet, left the banquet hall guided by his dog. The juggler merrily tossed his golden balls into the air till they seemed like a glistening cascade, but still the Overlord mused, unseeing. The wise Homunculus crouched at his feet uttering words of

## ARGUMENT FROM DATES

200 B. C.	Folke-King Eric rules in Wearfold, Norway. Olaf is Lord of the House of Wolves in Jutland.
190 B. C.	Balder, son of Olaf, is born.
189 B. C.	Thyra, daughter of Eric, is born.
171 B. C.	Balder adventures to Wearfold, kills a giant and marries Thyra.
140 B. C.	Odin, only son of Helga, is born.
100 B. C.	The Wolves are driven from Jutland by the Norsemen. Balder is transmutated into an oak tree. Under the command of Lord Helga the Wolves sail southwest and find a new home in Armorica.
99 B. C.	Harold, son of Odin, is born.
77 B. C.	Edward, son of Harold, is born.
58 B.C.	Edward adventures to the east and marries an eagle. She lays an egg, hatches a boy, changes to a woman and calls her son Cecil.
57 B. C.	Cæsar invades Gaul. The Wolves flee to Cornwall. Lord Harold dies and his son Edward becomes Lord. The family name is changed to Hubelaires.
43 A.D.	Claudius conquers most of England and builds the Hadrian Wall.
350 A.D.	The Romans are driven from England.
400 A.D.	The Hubelaires are never conquered, but repeated sieges of their castle, destruction of their lands, and frequent penitences so weaken them that they leave Cornwall and sail to the Isle of Lundy in the Hungry Sea. Here they build a walled town and live at peace for thirty years.
450 A.D.	The Rathlings invade Lundy and attack the Hubelaires. After long fighting with heavy losses on both sides, peace is declared, but the Rathlings remain in Lundy.
440 A.D.	The Rathlings break the peace and kill all the Hubelaires, but Raymond the Golden, before his death, becomes the father of two sons, Raymond and Doom.
462 A.D.	Raymond and Doom destroy the Rathlings and then sail to Armorica, where they establish the little kingdom of Walling.

wisdom and telling tales of Gobi and the buried city of Angkor. But nothing could rouse Cecil from his meditations.

At last he struck the silver bell with a hammer of gold. A serving man answered his call.

"Send me Lady Angelica and Prince Gustro," he commanded and then, once again, sat silent with chin in hand, waiting.

Soon the two came to his summons. The Lady Angelica was his only child, as fair and wise as any lady in all Walling. Prince Gustro some day would be her husband and help her rule the Hubelaires. Meanwhile he had perfected himself in the use of the broadsword, the lute, hunting

with the falcon, and the study of books. He was six feet tall and twenty years old and had in him the makings of a man.

The three sat around the fire, two waiting to hear the one talk, the one waiting till he knew just how to say what had to be said. At last Cecil spoke.

"No doubt you know what is on my mind. For years I have tried to give happiness, peace, and prosperity to the Hubelaires in our land of Walling. We were well situated in a valley surrounded by lofty forests and around them high mountains. Only one pass connected us with the great, cruel, and almost unknown world. In springtime, summer, and fall we sent our caravans of mules laden with grain, olives, and wine out into that world and from it we brought salt, weapons, and bales of woolen and silken goods for our needs. No one tried to molest us, for we had nothing they coveted. Perhaps years of safety made us soft, sleepy, and unprepared for danger."

"But danger has come. We should have realized there were things in that outer world we knew not and therefore could not even dream of. This spring our caravan, winding over the mountains, found, at the boundaries of the dark forest, a castle blocking their way. Their mules were not birds and could not fly over; they were not moles and could not burrow under. And the lads with the mules were not warriors and could not break their way through. So they came back, unmolested, 'tis true, but with their goods unbartered and unsold."

"I do not think that castle was built by magic. I have looked at it and it seems nothing but stone and mortar. And it is not held by an army of warriors, for all we hear is that one man occupies it. But what a man! Half again as tall as our finest lads and skilled in the use of weapons. I tried him out. One at a time I sent to him John of the flying axe, and Herman who had no equal with the two-handed sword, and Rubin who could split a willow wand at two hundred paces with his steel-tipped arrow. These three men lie, worm food, in the ravine below the castle. Meantime our country is strangulated so far as trade is concerned. We have cattle in the meadow, wood in the forest, and grain in the bins; but we have no salt, no clothes to cover us in the winter, no finery for our women, or weapons for our warriors. We will never have these while this giant in his castle blocks our caravans."

"We can capture the castle and kill the Giant!" cried Prince Gustavo with the impetuosity of youth.

"How?" asked the Overlord. "Did I tell you that the path is narrow? You know that. On one side the mountains tower as lofty as the eagle's



flight and as smooth as a woman's skin. On the other side is the Valley of the Daemons and no one has ever fallen into it and come back alive. The only path that leads through the castle is scarcely wide enough for one man or a man-led mule. If I could send an army 'twould be different; but only one man at a time can enter and there is no man able to combat this Giant successfully."

Lady Angelica smiled as she whispered. "We may conquer him through chicanery. For example: I have seen this hall filled with warriors and fair ladies almost put into endless sleep by gazing at the golden balls flying through the air and back into the clever hands of the juggler. And the blind Singer of Songs can make anyone forget all except the music of his lays. Do not forget our Homunculus is very wise."

Cecil shook his head. "Not thus will the question be answered. This mad Giant wants only one thing, and that means, in the lastward, everything so far as as our land and people are concerned. Perhaps you have guessed. I will tell you his demand ere you ask the question. Our Lady's hand in marriage, and this, when I die, to rule Walling and the Hube-laires."

Lady Angelica looked at Prince Gustavo. He saw her shake her head ever so slightly.

"Better to eat our grain and olives and drink our wine," he said. "Better that our men wear bearskins and our women cover themselves with the hides of deer. 'Twould be best to have them wear shoes of wood than pantofles of unicorn skin brought from Araby. It were a sweeter fate for them to perfume their bodies with crushed violets and mayflowers from the forest than to be scented with perfumes from the trees of the Spice Island in the East. This price is too heavy. Let us live like our fathers and our fathers' fathers, even climb trees like the monkey folk, rather than have such a ruler. Besides, I love the Lady Angelica."

The Lady smiled her thanks. "I am still thinking of the use of intelligence overcoming brawn. Have we no wisdom in Walling, besides the fair, faint dreams of a weak woman?"

"I will send for the Homunculus," her father replied. "He may know the answer to that question."

The little man came in. A man not born of woman, but grown for seven years in a glass bottle, during all of which time he read books held before him by wise men and was nourished with drops of wine and tiny balls of asphodel paste. He listened to the problem gravely, though at times he seemed asleep. At last he uttered one word: "Synthesis."

The Overlord picked him up and placed him on one knee.

"Have pity on us, Wise Man. We are only simple folk and know but little. What is the meaning of this strange word?"

"I know not," was the peculiar answer. "'Tis a word that comes to me out of the past. It has a sweet sound and surely must refer to something mystical. I recall now! It was when I was in the glass bottle that a wise man came and held before my eyes an illuminated parchment on which was written in letters of gold this word and its meaning! 'Synthesis. All things are one and one thing is all'."

"Which makes it all the harder for us to understand," signed the Overlord.

Lady Angelica rose from her seat and came where her father sat. She sank on the bearskin at his feet and took the little hand of the dwarf in hers.

"Tell me, my dear Homunculus, what wise man 'twas who thus showed you this word and its meaning on the illuminated parchment?"

"He was a very wise ancient who lives alone in a large cave, by a babbling brook. Yearly those living near him take bread, meat, and wine, leaving them at the mouth of the cave, but none dares enter it and thus for years he has never been seen. Perhaps he is still alive and takes the food, but if he lies sightless and thoughtless on his stone bed then the birds and little beasts eat the food, thinking it should not be wasted."

"I have heard of this hermit," exclaimed Cecil, "and when I was a boy went to the woods where the cave is but dared not enter. We will find out whether he is alive or dead. Gustavo, order horses so we four can visit him. Three horses for us and an ambling pad for our little friend so naught of harm will befall him."

The four came to the cave and entered it. A light burned at the far end and there was the wise man, very old, with naught but his eyes telling of the intelligence that never ages. On the table before him in a tangled confusion were glasses, earthenware, crucibles, one each of astro-labe and alembic, and an hourglass through which ran silver sands. This was arranged with cunning machinery so that every day it tilted around and once more allowed the sands to tell of the passing of the twenty and four hours. There were books covered with mildewed leather, locked with iron padlocks and spider webs. Hung from the ceiling was a representation of the sun with all the planets revolving eternally around that fair orb, but the pitted moon alternated with light and shadow.

The wise man read from a book written in a long dead language, and, now and then, he ate a crust of bread or sipped wine from a ram's horn, but never did he stop reading. When Cecil touched him on the shoulder to attract his attention he simply murmured, "By the Seven Sacred Caterpillars! Let me finish this page, for what a pity were I to die without knowing what this man wrote some thousands of years ago in Angkor."

At last he finished the page and sat blinking at them with his wise eyes sunk deep into a mummy face while his body shook with the decrepitude of age.

"What is the meaning of the word, 'synthesis'?" Lord Cecil asked him.

"'Tis a dream of mine which only now I find the waking meaning of."

"Tell the dream," the Overlord commanded.

"'Tis but a dream. Suppose there were thirty wise men, learned in all wisdom obtained from reading of ancient books on alchemy, magic, histories, and philosophy. These men know of animals and of jewels such as margarites and chrysoberyl; of all plants such as dittany, which cures wounds, and madragora, which compelleth sleep. Why should anyone want to sleep when there is so much to read and profit by the reading? But these men are old and some day will die. I would take these thirty old men and one young man and have them drink a wine I learned to distill years ago. Then by synthesis there would be only one body—that of the young man—but in his brain would be all the subtle and ancient wisdom of the thirty savants. Thus we could do, century after century, so no wisdom would be lost to the world."

Lady Angelica leaned over his shoulder. "Have you kept this wine you made?" she asked.

"Yes, and now I am working on its opposite, for why place thirty bodies into one unless you know the art of then separating that body back into the original thirty? But it is hard. For any fool can pour the wine from thirty bottles into one jar, but only a wise man can separate the wines and restore them to their original bottles."

"Have you tried this wine of synthetic magic?" asked Cecil.

"Yes, I took a crow and a canary bird and had them drink of it and now in yonder wicker cage a yellow crow sits and nightly fills cave with song as though it came from the lutes and citherns of faerie-land."

"Now that is my thought," cried the Lady Angelica. "We will take the best and bravest of our warriors and the Singer of Songs' pupil and

the Juggler of Golden Balls and the Sleep-maker, thirty men in all, and they and I will drink of this synthetic wine and thus the thirty will pass into my body. Then I will go and visit the Giant in his castle and there in the banquet hall I will drink of the other wine and there will be thirty to fight against the enemy of our people. They will overcome and slay him. Then I will drink again of the synthetic wine and in my body carry the thirty conquerors back to Walling. Once there, I will again drink of the second potion and the thirty men will leave my body, liberated by the magical wine. Some may be dead and others wounded but I will be safe and the Giant killed. Have you enough of it? Enough of both kinds?"

The old man looked troubled. "I have a flagon of the synthetic wine. Divided it would make sixty-two doses. Of the other, which changes the synthetized back into their original bodies, only enough for one large dose and a very few drops more."

"Try those drops on the yellow bird," Cecil commanded.

The old man poured from a golden bottle, graven with a worm that eternally renewed his youth by swallowing his tail, a few drops of a colorless liquid and offered it to the bird in the wicker cage. The bird drank greedily and of a sudden there were two birds, a black crow and a yellow canary and, ere the canary could pipe a song, the crow pounced on it and killed it.

"It worked!" croaked the old man. "It worked!"

"Can you make more of the second elixir?" asked Prince Gustavo.

"What I do once I can do twice," proudly declared the ancient.

"Then start at once and make more. While you are doing it we will take the golden bottle and the flagon and see what can be done to save the Hubelaires, though this is an adventure that I think little of, for 'tis fraught with much danger for my daughter." Thus spake the Overlord.

With the elixirs in a safe place they rode away from the old man's cave. But Prince Gustavo took the Overlord aside and said, "I ask a favor. Allow me to be one of those thirty men."

Cecil shook his head. "No. And once again and forever, no! In the doing of this I stand to lose the apple of my eye. If she comes not back to me I may die of grief, and then you, and you alone, will be left to care for the House of the Hubelaires. If a man has but two arrows and shoots one into the air, then he were wise to keep the other in his quiver against the day of need."

The Lady Angelica laughed as she suspected the reason of their whis-

pering. "I will come back," she said gaily, "for the old man is very wise and did you not see the yellow bird divide into two and the crow kill the canary?"

But the Homunculus, held in Lord Cecil's arms, started to cry.

"What wouldst thou?" asked the kindly Overlord.

"I would be back in my bottle again," sobbed the little one; and he cried until he went to sleep, soothed by the rocking canter of the war horse.

Two evenings later a concourse of brave men met in the banquet hall. There were great silent men, skilled in the use of mace, byrnies and baldricks, who could slay with the sword, spear, and double-bitted battle-axe. The juggler was there, the Singer of Songs, and the young Reader of Books, who was very wise. And with these was a man with sparkling eyes who could, by his glance, put men to sleep and then waken them with a snap of thumb and finger. And to this company was added the Overlord, Prince GUSTO and the trembling Homunculus. On her throne sat the Lady Angelica, beautiful and very happy because of the great adventure she had a part in. In her hand was a golden goblet and each of the thirty men held a crystal glass. These thirty and one drinking vessels were filled with the wine of synthesis. Then the Hagon, half empty, and the small golden bottle containing the colorless wine were hid by the Lady Angelica beneath her shimmering robe. Outside a ladies' horse, decked with diamond-studded harness, neighed uneasy in the moonlight.

Lord Cecil explained the adventure while all the thirty men sat very still and solemn, for they had never heard the like before. None feared a simple death, but this dissolution was something that made even the bravest wonder what the end would be. But when the time came and the command was given they one and all drained their crystal glasses, and even as the Lady drank her wine they drank with her to the last drop.

Then came a silence broken only by the shrill cry of a hoot owl, complaining to the moon, concerning the doings of the night folks in the dark forest. The little Homunculus hid his face in the shoulder of the Overlord, but Cecil and Prince GUSTO looked ahead of them over the banquet table to see what was to be seen.

The thirty men seemed to shiver and then grew smaller in a mist that covered them; finally only empty places were left at the banquet table. None were left but the two men, the Lady Angelica and the shivering Homunculus. The lady laughed.

"It worked," she cried. "I look the same but feel different, for in me are the potential bodies of the thirty brave men who will overcome the Giant and bring peace and security to our land. And now I give you the kiss of hail and farewell and will adventure forth on my waiting horse." Kissing her father on the cheek, her lover on the mouth and the little one on the top of his curly-haired head she ran bravely out of the room. Through the stillness they could hear her horse's hooves, silver-shod, pounding on the stones of the courtyard.

"I am afraid," shivered the little one. "Because I have all wisdom I am afraid as to this adventure and its ending."

The Overlord tried to comfort him. "You are afraid because you are so very wise. Prince Gustro and I would like to fear, but we are too foolish to do so. Can I do anything to comfort you, little friend of mine?"

"I wish I were back in my bottle," sobbed the Homunculus, "but that cannot be, because the bottle was broken when I was taken from it, for the mouth of it was very narrow, and a bottle once broken cannot be made whole again." So all that night Cecil rocked him to sleep, singing to him lullabies while Gustro sat wakeful before the fire, biting his fingernails and wondering what the ending would be.

Late that night Lady Angelica arrived at the gate of the Giant's castle and blew her wreathed horn. The Giant dropped the iron-studded drawbridge and peered curiously at the lady on the horse.

"I am the Lady Angelica," she said, "and I have come to be your bride if only you will free passage to our caravans so we can commerce with the great world outside. Then, when my father dies, you will be the Overlord of Walling, and perchance I will come to love you, for you are a fine figure of a man and I have heard much of you."

The Giant towered over the head of her horse. Placing a hand around her waist he plucked her from the steed, carried her to his banquet hall and sat down at one end of the table. Laughing in a rather silly manner, he walked around the room lighting pine torches and tall candles till the whole room was illumined. He poured a large glass of wine for the Lady and a much larger glass himself. Seated at the other end of the table he cried: "It is all as I dreamed. But who would have thought that the noble Cecil and the brave Gustro would be so craven! Let's drink to our wedding, and then to the bridal chamber."

He drank his drink in one swallow. But Lady Agelica took from under her gown a golden flask and raising it, she cried, "I drink to you and future, whatever it is!" And she drained the golden flask and sat very still. A mist filled the room and swirled widdershams in thirty pillars

around the long oak-plank table and when it cleared there were thirty men between the Giant and the Lady.

The Juggler threw his golden balls into the air; the man with the dazzling eyes looked hard at the Giant; the student opened a book and read backward the wise saying of dead gods; the young Singer of Songs plucked his harp and sang of wonderful deeds of brave men long since worm food. But the fighting men rushed forward and, on all sides, started the battle. The Giant jumped back, picked a mace from the wall and fought as never man had fought before. He had two objectives: to kill the men and then to reach the smiling Lady and strangle her with bare hands for the thing she had done to him. But ever between him and the Lady was a wall of men who, with steel, song and the magic of flashing eyes, cascades of glittering balls and backward reading, formed a living wall that could be crushed and bent but never broken.

For years after, in the halls of Walling, the Singer of Songs told of that fight while the Hubelaires sat silent listening. No doubt, as the tale passed from one Singer, aged, to the next Singer, young, it became ornamented, embroidered and labricated till it was somewhat different from what really happened that night. But even the bare truth-telling at first hand by the Lady Angelica was a great enough tale. For men fought, bled, and died in that hall. Finally the Giant, dying, broke through and almost reached the Lady, but the Song Man tripped him with his harp and the Wise Man threw his heavy tome in his face and the Juggler shattered his three golden balls against the Giant's forehead, and, at the lastward, the glittering eyes of the Sleep-Maker fastened on the dying ones of the Giant and sent him to his final slumber.

The Lady Angelica looked around her at the shattered hall and the thirty men who had done their part and she said softly: "These be brave men who have done what was necessary for the good of their country and the honor of the Hubelaires. I cannot forsake them or leave them hopeless," and she took the wine of synthesis and, drinking part, to every man she gave a drink, even to the dead men, whose lips she had to gently open and from whose gritted teeth she had to wipe the blood ere she could pour the wine into their breathless mouths. Then she went back to the table and, sitting there, she waited.

The mist again filled the room, covering the dead, the dying, and those who, though not fatally hurt, still panted from the fury of the battle. And when the mist cleared, only Lady Angelica was left there, for all the thirty had returned to her body through the magic of the synthetic wine.

"I feel old and in many ways different," the Lady whispered "for my strength has gone from me and I am glad there is no mirror to show my whitened hair and bloodless cheeks; the men who have come back into me were dead or badly hurt, and I must get back to my horse before I fall into a faint and die."

She tried to walk out of the room but, stumbling, fell. On hands and knees she crawled to where her horse waited for her. She pulled herself into the saddle and with her girdle tied herself there, and then she told the horse to go home. But she lay across the saddle like a dead woman.

The horse took her safely back to the Overlord's castle. Ladies in waiting laid her on her bed, washed her withered limbs and covered her wasted body with coverlets of lamb's wool and wise physicians gave her healing quaffs. Finally she recovered sufficiently to tell her father and her lover the story of the battle of the thirty warriors and wise men against the Giant and how he was dead and their land safe.

"And now go to the old man and get the other elixir," she whispered, "and when it works have the dead buried with honor and the wounded gently and wisely cared for. Thus we will come to the end of the adventure and it will be one that the Singer of Songs will tell for many winter evenings to the Hubdaires of Walling."

"You stay with her, Gustro," commanded the Overlord, "and I will take the wise Homunculus in my arms and gallop to the cave and secure the elixir from the old savant. When I return we will have her drink it and once again she will be young and whole. Then I will have you two lovers marry, for I am not as young as I was and I want to live to see the throne secure and, the gods willing, grandchildren running around the castle."

Gustro sat down by his lady's bed, took her wasted hand in his warm one, and placed a kiss on her white lips with his red ones. "No matter what happens and no matter what the end of the adventure, I will always love you, Heart-of-mine," he whispered. And Lady Angelica smiled on him and went to sleep.

Through the Dark Forest, Cecil, Overlord of Walling, galloped with the little wise man in his arms. He flung himself from his war-horse and ran quickly into the cave.

"Have you finished the elixir?" he cried.

The ancient looked up, as though in doubt as to what the question was. He was breathing heavily and little drops of sweat rolled down his leathery face.

"Oh yes, I remember now. The elixir that would save the lady and



take from her the thirty bodies of the men we placed in her by virtue of our synthetic magical wine. I remember now! I have been working on it. In a few more minutes it will be finished."

Dropping forward on the oak table he died. In falling, his withered hand struck a golden flask and overturned it on the floor. Liquid amber ran over the dust of ages. A cockroach came and drank of it and suddenly died.

"I am afraid," moaned the little Homunculus. "I wish I were back in my bottle."

But Cecil, Overlord of Walling, did not know how to comfort him.

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## The Reckoning

Our winner did not have it all the way this time, as the second in Dr. Keller's series took first place for a while; but this was the only contender, even though de Grandin and his friends nosed out the Cornwall story after a while and then finished well ahead in second place.

Most controversial this time was Donald A. Wollheim's parody-pastiche, of which two of you expressed positive dislike, while six rated it outstanding. From some of the comments on the part of those who praised it, I wonder if all of you realized that it was not intended as a genuine tale of horror, to arouse cold grue, but rather a spoof to arouse gentle mirth. Those who disliked it considered it on the cruel side; had I thought so—that the author either intended or unintentionally succeeded in making H. P. Lovecraft look ridiculous—I certainly would not have run the story. Was but good-humored fun, and I feel reasonably certain that HPL would have chuckled over it himself; for while he was never satisfied with his work, and felt unhappy about what he considered failure to achieve his aim, he did not take himself with grim seriousness.

Only Dr. Keller and part two of the serial totally escaped destestation votes, although, as you'll see in the letter section, Quinn draws some dissent in particular matters. Nonetheless, most of you rated him high.

Lightning has struck the same place again; here's the breakdown: (1) *The Last Work of Pietro of Apono*, Steffan B. Aletti; (2) *The Devil's Bride* (part two), Seabury Quinn; (3) *The Sword and the Eagle*, David H. Keller, M. D.; (4) a tie between *Spawn of Inferno*, Hugh B. Cavé and *The Horror out of Lovecraft*, Donald A. Wollheim; (5) *At the End of Days*, Robert Silverberg.

# Portraits By Jacob Pitt

*by Steven Lott*

It's always a triumph for an author to sell a story "as is", but sometimes it's better for both author and editor when the first-seen version isn't quite right, and the mss. has to be returned with objections clearly stated. More often than not, a second attempt doesn't make it, either, so STEVEN LOTT has earned the right to feel pleased that he caught the point of the original objections and managed to do what was necessary. Your editor is especially pleased, since the basic story struck him as being a fresh and forceful treatment of a theme which is far from new, in itself. The origins do not matter, the result is original.

HE PACED THE FLOOR NERVOUSLY, glancing from the window overlooking the garden, to the clock, to the painting above his small desk against the wall. He opened the window and stretched out on the davenport, he got up and closed it again. He tried to decipher some of his father's yellowing notes, now a quarter of a century old. Then he would take quill in hand and write a few words, then he would open the window again and pour another drink.

But his eyes never left the painting on the wall over the desk for more than a minute. *Where is George?*, he thought. He had sent word over an hour ago asking him to come.

He knew, or at least thought he had known that painting well. It had hung here in his study for ten years and for fifteen years before that, in his bedroom. He had seen that painting practically every day of his life and it never bothered him before, but now he imagined he could feel it watching back.

He laughed at himself. *You're acting like a child*, he thought. There was probably a perfectly simple explanation; there had to be. *I hope George knows what it is!* After all it was a perfectly ordinary painting, an oil, so far as he could tell. The subject matter was less than radical; a shore line, the ocean, the clear blue sky, and a bright sun beginning to dip in the west.

There was a knock on the door, "Mr. Darringby, Mr. Newton has just arrived, sir."

"Thank you, Edwin. I'll be down directly."

"John, boy." George moved with great speed and agility for an obese London lawyer in his early fifties; he carried his age and weight well, and their handshake still ended up in a traditional and friendly test of strength, which George made sure of losing at least half the time.

"John, boy, it's been a long time since we've seen you last."

"About a month," he replied.

"That's right, at Conly's party. Book keeping you pretty busy?"

He nodded. "You never told me father had such 'formless' handwriting. Believe me those notes were written for no one but himself. But, look, I'm offended that I had to ask you over, you should know you and Karin are welcome here at any time."

George grunted and slid down in the old leather chair that so closely fitted his contour.

John sat on the arm of the coach, "George, have you ever heard of Jacob Pitt?"

Two beady little eyes watched him, the large mouth became pursed, "Pitt, Pitt . . . I had a client once name of Pitt—Harry Pitt; he's been in jail now ten years. At the University I had a professor named Pitt, one named Jacobs too. I don't recall any Jacob Pitt, but name does have a familiar ring to it."

"He did the painting in my study, the one of the sea."

"Hmmm—yes, now that you mention it I do remember seeing the name on that painting."

"Did you know him?" asked John.

"No."

"Did father ever speak of him?"

George thought for a moment then shook his head. "Not that I recall."  
"Do you know who sent that painting."

"All I remember about it is that the painting was sent to this house in your name the day you were born. I'll check the records if you want."

John nodded; George rose out of the chair and walked over to him. "John, boy, you have a troubled look tonight. I am your friend and your solicitor; which one do you need?"

John twisted the remainder of his cigar into an ash tray and said, "Come with me. Maybe you can give me that answer."

George sat on the davenport and sipped sherry as John went through the piles of papers and old books that were strewn across the desk.

"Here it is," said John, holding up a small, blue and slightly aged book, "my mother's diary for 1822, the year I was born and the year my father died." He flipped through the pages and handed the open book to George. "Read where I have it underlined."

George put on his spectacles and began to read the short passage: *Among the gifts is a lovely painting of the authorship of one Jacob Pitt. It is a scene of the sunrise over the ocean. Simple and tasteful. I shall hang it in John's room.*

George looked up at the painting on the wall. Its sun was not at sunrise but was beginning to set on the other side of the picture.

"You're not seriously suggesting—" he started to laugh but stopped when he saw John's sober expression.

"I had hoped," said John slowly, "That you could give me some logical explanation. But if all you can do is laugh it off . . ."

"It has to be some kind of mistake," began George.

"That is the only ocean scene in the house; it is the only painting by Jacob Pitt."

He took the painting down from the wall and handed it to George who accepted it reluctantly.

"Look, here!" John pointed to a black spot of ink on the yellow sun. "One month ago I put this spot of ink just to the left of the sun and forget about it until today. Now the sun has moved over and covered the ink."

George got up and hung the picture back in its original place. He put his hand on John's shoulder and spoke in his most fatherly voice, "John, boy, you've been working pretty hard on this book, haven't you?"

"I haven't really gotten into it yet. Just the preliminary work."

George wasn't listening. "I think you're overworking yourself; why don't you relax a little?"

"Not until the book's finished."

"Marry Cynthia, go on a nice long honeymoon; you can afford it."

"It was his request that I finish it."

George's face turned red, then purple; the veins in his neck stood out like those on an angry rooster. "Forget that damn book! It's evil! It's vile!— It killed your father."

John spoke softly. "It has to be written."

"John, this is 1847, not the Middle Ages. That book destroyed him and I can see the same insanity developing in you. The delusions, the obsession, the morbid, unnatural obsession—" John bit his lip and turned from George. He had heard things like that all his life, but he never expected it from George. It cut deep.

"You're just like your father— pigheaded," George said quietly, "and I didn't think he was mad, either. What do you want me to do?"

John took a piece of paper and jotted down a few things as he spoke. "I want you to find out everything you can about that painting, and Mr. Jacob Pitt, and any possible connection with my father. I want you to look through his old records for anyone mentioned with the initials *E. B.* In his last notes he spoke of meetings with *E. B.* and *J. P.*, possibly Jacob Pitt. I haven't had any luck here yet." He folded the paper and stuck it in George's top pocket.

"Come on; I'll see you to the door."

Cold and clammy it drifted about his head. The thick, formless fog gently carressed him, enveloped him, grasped at his heart and lungs as if it wanted them. Soft, living, white, streaked with the feeble light from a shop window, creating drifting shades of ghostly images before him.

A shingle, swung and creaked above the shop, it read:

Dr. Ezra Bartalemae

CURIO SHOPPE

It was the Last *E. B.* in the directory.

A bell on the door clapped sharply as he entered the shop. The night chill melted before the dying hearth.

The shop was large and, in spite of the hearth, ill-lit. The only light came from the embers and it cast an impotent light across the room, molding distorted, flickering shadows on the opposite wall.

There were two large tables and a counter covered with a strange

array of objects, bottles filled with yellow, blue, and green liquids; misshapen and malformed bits of pottery and metal; various parts of various animals, on chains, under glass, or just lying around loose; charms, rings, blades, and amulets with meaningless inscriptions; small human dolls and candles; odd smelling substances tied up in little packages; large glass balls and small glass balls; the assorted remains of a human skeleton; three human skulls, one hollowed out and made into a drinking mug.

John read down the titles of the books on the shelves; one or two were in German or Russian, some in Latin, but the majority were in a number of dead Indo-European dialects which he could not even identify.

"An un-Godly place," he could almost hear George mutter.

"May I help you?" a voice came from behind. John turned. He had expected an old man to come hobbling in from the back room supporting his twisted, shriveled body with his twisted cane. Instead he turned to face a pleasant looking man of about thirty. He had black hair, blue eyes, and spoke softly with a slight scottish brogue.

"I am looking for a Dr. Ezra Bartalemae," said John.

"I am he, Mr. Darringby," the man replied.

"How do you know my name?" asked John, since he was not expected.

"I knew your father well. There is a strong resemblance, but I suppose you have been told that many times."

"Yes, but you talk as though you knew my father personally. Yet you could not have been more than a child when he died."

"That is of no consequence now. Please . . . if I may get to the point: You came, I believe, to inquire about Mr. Jacob Pitt?"

John said that he had and began to ask how he knew that. Bartalemae broke in. "There are a great many things I can not tell you." Bartalemae sighed. "But your father was my friend, so I will tell you what I can."

Bartalemae put some more logs on the fire for heat and light. "I understand you've begun work on the book."

"You know of my father's book?"

Bartalemae laughed softly. "My book. I started that book months before your father became involved. He took over the project after I had abandoned it. If you take my advice—and if you're anything like your father you won't—you'll take those notes and burn them. No? I thought not.

"Anyway, I spoke to your father about Mr. Pitt. He was very anxious

to meet him, to interview him for the book. Mr. Pitt had talked me out of the project; I had hoped he could talk your father out of it, too. The first two meetings came off quietly, but he was stubbornly determined to write that book.

"The last meeting ended in a violent argument. Persuasion had not worked, so Mr. Pitt resorted to threats.

"Three days later your father died of a heart attack."

"Is that all you can tell me?" asked John.

"Yes," replied Bartalemac, "except that above your father's deathbed was found a painting of a sea gull with an arrow through its heart."

"Where can I find Jacob Pitt."

"You can't," said Bartalemac, "nor may you stay here any longer." He steered him toward the door. "Perhaps you will understand better before you finish that book."

He opened the door and extended his hand to John. "Good luck," he said. The hand was like ice, cold and damp. "And remember: The sun need not set."

Before John could answer the door closed and left him to the secure obscurity of the fog.

John walked the streets the rest of the night, going over things again and again. Something was wrong, something was very wrong. He felt that he would find the answer in his father's notes.

Morning found him at George's law firm of Newton, Wasburn, and Gold.

"John, boy," said George, "come in. My God you look terrible! Let me get you a drink."

"Thank you," he said, collapsing into a chair. "I could use one."

He gulped it down and smiled as if at some private joke that came to his mind.

"What can I do for you?" asked George.

John came right to the point. "Did anyone ever work on the book with father?"

"Why, yes," said George, "Tom MacAdam; in fact he was the one who got your father started on all this rot."

John stared down at the floor for a moment, "Describe him."

"MacAdam? I only met him a couple of times and that was over twenty-five years ago; but as I recall he was tall, quite handsome, thick black hair, the eyes were blue, I think."

"Did he speak with a Scottish brogue?" asked John.

George thought for a moment. "Yes, now that you mention it. Yes, he did have a brogue and a soft voice, too, if I recall correctly."

"What happened to him? He'd be over fifty now if he were still alive, wouldn't he?"

"Yes, of course he would be."

John was shaking like a leaf. George got him another drink. "Are you all right, John?"

"Yes, I'm just cold, tired, and a little confused. I'll be all right, after I get some sleep, but first tell me what happened to Tom MacAdam."

"I couldn't say; I haven't seen him since before your father's death. I could check the records. Is it important?"

"It could be," replied John. He downed the drink and continued, "There was a painting over my father's deathbed."

"Yes," said George, "the sea gull; I remember that well."

"Do we still have it?"

"No, your mother sold it after your father's death. It upset her every time she looked at it."

"Do you know the painter?"

"No, but I can check it."

John got up. "Send the information over as soon as you get it. I'm going to get a few hours sleep before I get started on that book."

His nightmare was shattered by a knock on his study door.

"Mr. Darringby, sir."

"Yes?" he yawned.

"A message from Mr. Newton."

John sat up on the davenport. "Just slip it under the door."

He unfolded the paper and read:

*My Dear John,*

*I hope you are rested and feeling better. I have found out the following concerning the matters we discussed.*

*(A) Mr. MacAdam was reported lost at sea in 1822. Body never recovered.*

*(B) Your family records in my possession show that the painting was sold to a Mr. Bartolomae. The painter is recorded as Mr. Jacob Pitt.*

*If I may be of further assistance, I am always Your servant,  
George R. Newton*

John's eyes moved across the room and to the painting on the wall



over his desk. The sun moved a little each day, imperceptibly, like the hands of a clock, ticking off the time. Ticking off the hours of life. Slowly and steadily until it dropped below the horizon — and then ?

He removed the painting and set it on the windowsill; the sun had moved beyond the ink dot. He took a candle and slowly brought the flame up to the painting.

He screamed as the fire licked against the painted sun. A violent pain passed through him as if he had put the flame to his own flesh. He dropped the candle and collapsed to the floor in sweated agony.

There was a pounding on the door. "Are you all right, sir ?"

John dragged himself to his feet and opened the door.

"Are you all right, sir ? I thought I heard you scream ?"

"I'm all right, Edwin," he wheezed. "Take this painting and put it somewhere safe." He could no longer bear to look at it.

"I'll pack it down in the wine cellar, sir."

"Good; thank you, Edwin."

John gave orders to the servants that he was not to be disturbed for any reason. He instructed them leave all food and mail outside the door. He wanted no distractions. He began to work on the book.

For the next three months he worked like a man obsessed. A few hours sleep a day, little food, no visitors and constantly sending out for more ink and paper and coffee, strong and black.

Inch by inch a picture was forming from his father's notes. Bit by bit the facts fell into place as he neared completion of the manuscript. He began to understand what he was up against, what he was exposing: a black, demonic evil as old as Lucifer himself. It was unbelievable, but it was true; the facts were there. Not in his most depraved nightmares could he ever imagine anything so foul, so vile, so malignant . . .

Bartalemae was one of them. He wondered what they offered his father not to write what he knew. Position ? Power ? Eternal life ? Maybe all of them. Maybe even more.

One day he was sifting through the mail, discarding letters from his friends, when he came across a small, black envelope with his name written in white.

He opened it and read;

*Mr. John Darrighy,*

*It is urgent that you meet me at Dr. Bartalemae's at once. Matter of life or death.*

*Signed,  
Jacob Pitt*

A subtle threat. He smiled to himself. Good; he had them scared. He placed the note back in the envelope and calmly burned it.

It was rather late and all the servants, save Edwin, had gone home for the night, when John suddenly burst out of his study for the first time in three months, and began shouting for Edwin, who came as fast as he could.

"I've finished!" he said, shaking Edwin slightly. "Go take a message to the Newtons and Miss Tower to come over at once."

"It is rather late, sir."

"I don't care; tell them I'm breaking out the finest vintage in the house, that'll bring old George. And propose to Cynthia for me—no, I'll do it myself. Get moving, Edwin, I haven't got all night."

When Edwin had gone John headed for the wine cellar.

The cellar was dark, but—a few candles illuminated his way as he went down the line of bottles looking for a good burgundy for George.

A cold chill ran down his back as his eyes came to rest on a chest in the far corner. He knew, instinctively, that it was the chest that contained his painting.

He slowly walked over. He lifted the lid and removed the painting. "Oh God," he said softly.

The painting was all black; the sun had set!

Upstairs the front door opened and closed with a slam. The bottle of burgundy slipped from his hand and smashed on the floor.

"Edwin," he called. There was no answer.

"Edwin," he said louder. He could sense something coming closer.

A sudden draft of undetermined origin suddenly and completely extinguished the candles, leaving him in the pitch blackness of the cellar.

Footsteps in the hall.

"Who is there," he demanded.

The cellar door creaked open.

A dark, hunched silhouette appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Who is it."

The reply came: "My name is Jacob Pitt. I've come for my painting."



# Inquisitions

## EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: MASTER OF ADVENTURE

by Richard A. Lupoff

Ace Books, 1120 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N. Y. 10036; 1965; preface by Henry Hardy Heinz; 317 pp including preface, introduction, bibliography, and check list; 95c.

This is not a soft-cover reprint of the hardcover Canaveral edition of 1955; the author tells us in his preface that considerable new material has been added; various errors which "... had crept into the first edition despite all efforts at accuracy ..." have been corrected, and various points made in the earlier edition have been clarified and expanded. We have then a version which will be of interest to the Burroughs lover who appreciated the original edition.

Not having seen the first edition, I cannot make comparisons; I can only say that my original intention, upon receiving this book, was to read it a few chapters at a time—and I found myself so engrossed that I could not put it aside, save for vital functions, and then with reluctance, until I had finished it. It is possible that some readers may feel, as I did, that more space than necessary is given to synopses of the books I had read—but I had no complaints about the synopses of the books I had not read. So much for this type of complaint; obviously, the synopses are not overmuch at all!

Lupoff says in his introduction that the harshest criticisms of the original edition came from two sources: the all-out ERB fans who could not bear to read words suggesting that *everything* Burroughs wrote is not an undying masterpiece, without flaw of any kind, or that he might have picked up some ideas from earlier writers, and those who considered Burroughs' works utter trash from beginning to end and not worth serious attention at all—except perhaps, to prove how worthless each one is.

While I have not read ERB entire—at this writing (March 4, 1969), I'm reading *Tarzan and the Madman*, so have one more regular Tarzan novel and the Leiber pastiche to go; the last two Venus books; the last three Pellucidar books, and a selection of the independent novels, exclusive of *The Land That Time Forgot* and *The Moon Maid*, which I have read—you can see that my reading in Burroughs is sufficient to have some sort of informed opinion. I hold no brief for either of the extreme reactions. While I do not expect to re-read the Tarzan books (with the possible exception of *Tarzan at the Earth's Core*, which ERB sneaked in to the Pellucidar series—a most sneaky trick, but I'm glad he did it, as it has special virtues), I am keeping my copies of the other three series: Mars, Venus and Pellucidar, and certainly could bear to re-read *The Land That Time Forgot* (Turn To Page 57)

# The Red Sail

by Charles Hilan Craig

This is the last of eight stories by CHARLES HILAN CRAIG (all independent of each other), which appeared in *WEIRD TALES*; the first was *Damned*, which ran in the issue of May 1925.

HILGARD THE MIGHTY stood proud and slim and straight in the bow of his ship while the red sail cracked in the breeze and the brawny oarsmen bent to their work. The tiny ship went through the water like a live thing and the coast of Norway was far, far behind and the coast of Britain was ahead, a fair mark in a purple sea under a cloudless blue sky.

When they had ravaged the town the Norse carried away the best of the plunder to their ship and were bent on turning about to return again to the country they loved so dearly. Hilgard the Mighty, always first ashore, always last to go on board, stood knee-deep in the flood and looked back again on the ruined town.

Hilgard called upon his men to await him and strode back to the shore through threatening surf. A maiden stood there.

Hilgard, heretofore impervious to the wiles of women, looked deep into the blue eyes of the Saxon girl. Those eyes were alluring and beauti-

ful, albeit very troubled. The stern set of her lips alone marred an un-escapable beauty. She looked at him without malice, without hatred, but her lips curled in scorn.

"Beast!" she said in a low tone, but the beauty of her voice roared in his ears as would the dull and distant thunder of a thousand sails. He looked still into her eyes and there arose in him an alien desire.

"This woman goes with me," he roared back across the water to Old Eric, who was minding the helm.

Old Eric came to his side, bounding through the waves, his harsh face set in still harsher mold.

"She does not go," cried Old Eric.

"She goes with me," answered Hilgard stubbornly.

"Hilgard," said Old Eric, "the strain of Loki is upon you. She goes not, else tonight you feast with your fathers in Valhalla and the curse be upon you forever."

In the woman's face there was no semblance of fear when Hilgard drew her roughly to him and lifted her in his arms and carried her through the surf to the ship.

The red sail groaned in the wind and the men bent to their oars and the ship leaped through the water. Night came upon them, black and ominous, and the storm came and ere dawn Hilgard the Mighty was with his fathers in Valhalla.

## 2

THE CAPTAIN WAS A COLD HARSH man who had early made his mark, as a warrior in Caesar's army. He was a fighting man who would have none of woman, but held aloof from her as one accursed; but when his ship crossed from Gaul to the shore of Britain and he stood watching the flames which were eating out the guts of the town he looked twice into the eyes of a woman.

Her eyes were blue like the sky and her hair was golden like the sand and her skin compared to the skin of the Roman beauties as would the white rose compare with the pink. Her brow was very fair, her nose straight, her lips rich and inviting.

He came to her and looked deep into her eyes and the harsh masque of his face softened a little.

"You are . . . who are you?"

"Feldah, my name."

"Have I seen you then in Rome?"

Her terror and hatred melted under his eyes. "I have never traveled so far as Rome."

"Was it then in Gaul?"

"I have never been across the sea."

"Where then have I seen you?"

"I know not. I have never been from this place."

He looked at her and cursed under his breath. She was lying. He knew he had seen her, yet this was his first trip to Britain. "Have you seen aught of me before?"

She shook her head.

Puzzled, he frowned and bit his lip. It was a deep matter to fathom. He carried her with him to the ship in the grim darkness that was falling. Standing under the sail when a haggard moon was risen he held her close to him and looked at her. "Where?"

She raised her eyes to his suddenly, fear showing in them. "I remember—oh, so vaguely. There was a Viking ship with a red sail. There were many oarsmen. You—and I. Then a storm . . ."

Driving up into the North Sea the ship perished and all on board.

### 3

CAPTAIN DE CRIE OF BONAPARTE'S army landed with his small group of men on the British coast to lay certain devious plans for the approaching invasion. DeCrie was among Napoleon's most trusted lieutenants, for none other could be given this most important mission. In the guise of peasants they set about their work so effectually that they had finished within the week.

In the tavern on the night they were to leave, DeCrie first saw the little girl of the blue eyes and golden hair. It came upon him at once that the maid was known to him, and he turned his eyes away from her and looked only to his drink.

When he had got outside he stood for a moment inadvertently near the lighted window. She walked past him and saw his face and exclaimed involuntarily. Like a flash DeCrie, who was a man used to emergencies, clapped his hand over her mouth and carried her with him into the darkness.

"*Mon Dieu*," he kept whispering over and over to himself.

At the appointed place a small boat awaited him. The men cried out at the sight of the woman, but they rowed them to the larger boat and got under way toward France.

When the maid was quieted, DeCrie went to her and laughed triumphantly and said, "Your tale was not to be told."

"What do you mean?"

"You would have betrayed me."

"I? No!"

"But yes. You recognized me."

"No," she said levelly. "I do not know you. I thought I did, but I do not."

"But I have seen you before. Was it in Paris?"

"No."

She looked at him. He was staring out to sea.

"There is memory," he whispered, "a bitter sweet memory of a ship rolling under a red sail and the coars of many men, of a blue-eyed maiden on the sands of an ancient Britain; of death. There is a memory of Caesar's host, again of a blue-eyed maid on a newer England. And death yet again . . ."

Wide eyed with wonder she looked at him — and remembered.

"Always a ship," she whispered. "And always death."

Captain DeCrie did not live to report to Napoleon.

4

JOHN ROBERTSON SAW HER FIRST when she was shown to the chair opposite him in the crowded dining-car on the way to the pleasure resort. He had just started to attack the slender fish course when she sat down. At first he paid her no attention, but noting the beauty of her hand his gaze followed up a slender white arm to her shoulder, to her chin, to her eyes of a lustrous blue.

"Why, hello," he said.

She hesitated before answering and then presently said, "Hello."

"Oh. I thought at first that I knew you," he said half apologetically. "But perhaps I haven't had the pleasure."

Her eyes threw him a puzzle glance.

"It is very strange," she said. "But I had the same feeling — that I know you, that I have known you somewhere, sometime in the past."

"I live in America," he said. "This is my first trip abroad."

"And I live in London. I never have been to America."

"Better come over," he told her.

"No," she smiled. "I fear that I never could stand the trip. You see I'm terribly afraid of the seas."

His eyes widened.

"Sometimes," he said, "I have dreams about Vikings and a ship with a red sail and sailors and a watery death—silly rot."

"I have had the same dreams," she said quietly.

"Do you believe in reincarnation?" he asked suddenly.

"No."

"Then how do you account for our knowing each other—for our dreams?"

"I can't account for them. It is all so strange—those dreams of a powerful man carrying me away to sea. And always there is storm and battle and death."

He looked at her, a grim tightening gripping his heart.

They spent the afternoon together when they had reached the resort, and in the early evening he drew her down to the side of the water.

"Let's take a ride in the boat."

She drew back in dismay. "I—I'm afraid."

Laughing he lifted her in his arms and put her in the boat and gripped the oars and rowed away from the bank. The water was remarkably free of boaters, and despite the falling darkness her fear died. Under his stroke the lights of the boathouse fell far behind.

It came to them both at the same instant.

The rock tore a deep gash in the bottom of the craft and the water swirled through.

She was brave. There was in her voice no note of hysteria as she said, "It has come. Always, always it has come. Always, dear, it must come. Water . . . together a moment . . . then death . . ."

Robertson saw it too at the same moment, but he laughed aloud.

"It is fate," she said.

"Fate be damned. We'll beat fate," he told her.

He gripped her as the boat sank from beneath them, churning the water. She remained very quiet as he started to swim. He cried out for aid, but there was no one to hear. The lake seemed deserted now. It was as if a grim and inexorable master of destiny were guiding them to doom. He held her up in the water so that her face was above it, and laughed defiance at the gathering darkness. He swam, she with her hand on his shoulder, cutting through the water slowing, hauling her. In an hour his muscles seemed bursting, but the lights were far distant.

Presently she sensed his fatigue and said, "Let me go and you swim on alone. You could get there."



He laughed in his weariness. "I love you," he said.

Another hour. The lights were torturing phantoms in a vague and incredible distance. The canopy of stars hung like a grotesque ceiling. The wind caressed the surface of the water, fanning up gentle waves. Through all of John Robertson's being there came a wave of nostalgia, deadening and terrifying. A moment he was ready to give up, then felt her hand press harder on his shoulder.

"Can we do it?" she asked in a dull voice.

"Yes," he said harshly. "Yes, yes!"

He fought on and on in despair, his heart breaking, till with a hoarse cry he felt his feet touch the bottom. He stood up and carried her ashore and stood with her in his arms, stood looking out over the water, his clothes streaming, his lips bloody, his heart pounding, his hair soaked, his eyes flashing despite his deathly weariness.

For the barest fraction of a second, then, it seemed to him that far out in the darkness he saw the red sail of a Viking ship dip to him in proud and triumphant salute.

### INQUISITIONS

(When it comes to the second and third parts of *The Moon Maid*—originally titled "The Moon Men" and "The Red Hawk", I cannot go along with Lupoff and others who claim that this is the best of Burroughs. If not the very worst, it's among the worst, showing nearly all his faults, hardly any of his virtues, and on top of that a pretentious manner: the straining attempt to write at a higher level of quality than the author is able, with results that are now exasperating, and now unintentionally funny.)

No matter; Lupoff and I may differ on a few other details where I have read a book in question, but this does not in any way diminish the value of what Lupoff has given us. (For example, while his case for Burroughs having read and been influenced by E. L. Arnold's *Li Gulliver Jones* strikes me as very prob-

(continued from page 51)

able—the resemblances between many aspects of Arnold's novel and the first three John Carter stories are so close as to make it a far greater problem to explain them away than to assume borrowing—I'm not at all convinced that A. Hyatt Verrill needed to have read the Pellucidar stories in order to have written *The Inner World*, or that Stanton A. Coblentz needed to have read them in order to have written *In Caverna Below*. If Mr. Coblentz denies having read any of the Pellucidar stories, I would find his denial entirely acceptable. Mr. Verrill is beyond reach.)

This, then, is a book which I will keep and cherish, along with those ERB novels which I like most; I expect to dip in to Lupoff's survey now and then, and possibly re-read in its entirety at least once. For Burroughs lovers with a sense of proportion, *positively recommended*. RAWL

# Guatemozin The Visitant

by Arthur J. Burks

(author of *The Room of Shadows*, *The Place of the Pythons*)

SPADES AND MATTOCKS HAD UNEARTHED a little of the glory of the vanished city and my laborers had gone, leaving me to gloat in solitude over my find. As I stood in that narrow cleft, which had so recently been uncovered, my whole body tingled with ecstasy. To right and left were the ancient writings of the Aztecs, etched by hands lifeless these many centuries, writings that had remained here, immovable as the rocks on which their seal was set, until the debris of time had covered them from sight. And now they had been brought forth again, a treasure house of knowledge to which only I possessed the key.

It was worth all the hardships which had been mine, worth all the suffering that sickness had brought me during the weary months just passed, just to stand there and pass caressing fingers over the rough stone whose markings would reveal to me the secrets of a civilization vanished from the earth. There were dark openings in the masonry here and there, openings which I had caused to be cleared, but whose depths I had not penetrated. What would I find? Bodies of brown men, clothed in all the splendor which was the right of nobles of Montezuma? Chests of treasure? Or hidden things, hoary with age, emanating intangible menace across the years? I licked my lips with anticipation. I was like one mad with pleasure. My treasure was here, the treasure of a digger after antiquity, and I had but to put forth my hand and take it.

ARTHUR J. BURKS first appeared in WEIRD TALES under the pseudonym of *Estil Critchis*, in the November and December 1924 issues—the first two of the restored pulp size format and under the editorship of Farnsworth Wright. With the February 1925 issue, he started a series, *Strange Tales From Santa Domingo*, under his own name. This was the first of 29 appearances, not including re-appearances in the reprint department; starting in 1929, Wright began to reprint stories from earlier issues of WT that were particularly popular with the readers. This continued up to the end of 1939; and during this period, two Burks stories were included: *When the Graves Were Opened* (December 1925; reprinted September 1937) and *Bells of Oceana* (December 1927; reprinted April 1934). Both of these, as well as the Santa Domingo series, appear in the Arkham House collection. Burks' final appearance in WEIRD TALES was *Morpho on the Screen*, in the March 1954 issue.

By the time that Harry Bates was preparing to launch *ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER SCIENCE*, Arthur J. Burks was a big name in the pulp field, and there is a story about his 1930 three-part novel in *ASTOUNDING*, *Earth the Marauder*, that very possibly has some aspects of truth about it, even if it is entirely apocryphal. According to this tale, Bates told Burks that he'd like to have a serial from him, but not something that AJ batted out overnight—as with L. Ron Hubbard and others, Burks was notorious for speed in turning out copy. So Mr. Burks, we are told, agreed, went home, wrote the 30,000 plus words of *Earth, the Marauder* in less than three days, then put it aside for a couple of weeks before bringing it in. Bates read it and then congratulated AJ on a splendid story, saying, "See how much better you do when you take your time?"

I hesitated. It seemed like sacrilege, somehow, like despoiling the grave of a friend. And so, after having labored these many months to attain a desired end, I hesitated to explore further and to take what was rightfully my own. I could not help regarding my discovery with a feeling of awe.

Mexico had always interested me. I had delved into her history time after time, grasping something new with each delving, hoping, always hoping that I should one day unearth those secrets which were denied the world when the religious fanatics who followed the banner of the Great Captain caused the story of the Aztecs to be destroyed by fire. It had seemed a hopeless task until now!

With the deciphering of these ancient writings before me the doors of the centuries might be rolled back so that all the world might approach and peer through.

And this, I promised myself, would be but the beginning. Given new strength by this success, I would continue on, unraveling the thread of forgotten history, passing it skein by skein by skein through my eager fingers, until all the world should know the glory which was Anahuac.

But I was tired from my many labors. My head ached. I had driven my laborers from dawn to dusk and I had forced myself to the very limit of endurance. In spite of the whips of my desire, which lashed me on, I decided to wait until morning to penetrate the mysteries of my treasure. I rose and brushed the dust from my knees, blinking my eyes to drive away the atry dots, yellow and significant, which hung before my eyes. I had driven myself too harshly, I told myself—and laughed, knowing that when morning came I would drive myself more harshly still.

I wrinkled my nose at the odors which came from the openings in the walls of the cleft. Odors that clung to my nostrils strangely, stirring faint echoes in my memories—though I knew I had never before experienced them. How could I? An hour ago there had been no openings and, from the top of the cleft, I had been urging my peon laborers to greater speed. I laughed now as I recalled it, laughed at the superstitious dread which had flashed, as though at a signal, across the faces of the peons, when the openings were exposed. I paid them in the end and tired though they were, they went away hurriedly, half-running, looking back over their shoulders to where I stood, as though expecting unseen monsters to follow them out of the openings.

There was no place in my heart for superstition. How could there be; and I a scientist? Ogres of the mind, invented by simple people with the brains of children! I believed in nothing I couldn't feel, see or prove.

I clambered stiffly from the cleft and looked around me. There was no human being anywhere within the scope of my vision, and nothing to show that humanity ever came this way, save the heap of debris brought up from the cleft. I needed no one to guard my treasure house, I knew, for the peons who had worked for me would spread many tales among their kind, and native superstition would be an effectual barrier to the curious. This was bad, too, for I might yet need aid in my investigations, and knew that I might never find it, unless I secured it from among the educated of the Capital City. This I did not care to do, for I knew the ways of Mexico, and foresaw all sorts of wrangles with officials whose imaginations would fill my discovery with that vast, undiscovered treasure which was lost when Malinche drove the Aztecs from Tenochtitlan. No,

I needed a peon to help me, or a man of my own race—and knew that I could get neither by the time I was ready.

I was pondering my difficulties as I strode away, heading for a road that led into the heart of Mexico City where I hoped to catch a ride.

Just before I passed around a knoll I turned and looked back. Not as the peons had done, with fear consuming my soul, but for a last look at my treasure house, which I would not see again until tomorrow.

I stopped short, with an ejaculation of amazement. At the lip of the cleft, his torso visible over a shoulder of the pile of debris, stood a regal figure! It was a man, I knew, even at that distance, and he stood as straight as a statue, with none of the servile sag to his shoulders which is the mark of the burden-bearer of Mexico. Yet he wasn't a white man—nor was he like any Indians that I knew—nor was he a member of that hybrid myriad which is the population of Mexico. A commanding figure, like a bronze god, I thought, as he stood there, indifferent to his surroundings. The dying sun was tinting his upturned face, and the man was facing the west, motionless, watching the sun go down.

I turned swiftly and started back; but therewas a feeling of uncertainty in me which amazed me because I could not understand it. I wanted to go back, to protect my treasure; yet something deep within me warned me, telling me to turn again, and leave this bronze man to his musings. After all, I argued, what harm could he do? He couldn't carry away my discovery, but . . .

He turned, calmly, as one turns at an undesired interruption, and looked at me. He did not start, did not cower as a peon would have done, and seemed to regard me as a person decidedly his inferior. Faugh! An Indian! I'd show him.

"Hey!" I shouted. "Get away from there! What are you doing? Where did you come from?"

He shook his head slightly, and I noted that his black eyes wandered over my whole figure, and that there was dawning wonder in them, as though he pondered what manner of man I was. His black eyes came to rest on my face, and in that instant all expression vanished from his countenance, so that he looked like a graven image, asking nothing, saying less. Then I noticed that he wore clothing such as I had never seen before. He wore the girdle and square *tliumalli* of the Aztecs, made of the finest cotton! He wore sandals and—I stared on seeing this—their soles were of gold, and the thongs which held them were embossed in gold. There were precious stones in his cloak and sandals, emeralds and jadeite. I was furious.

"Who are you?" I shouted. "Where did you get that clothing? You have been rifling my discovery! Give it to me instantly, or I will take you to the city and give you to the law!"

He shook his head again, and a trace of a smile touched his lips. But I was staring at him, noting new details of his dress. There was no ornament on his head, save a *panache* of green plumes, hanging down his back . . .

Which I knew to indicate military rank among the Aztecs!

My anger knew no bounds, though I decided to move cautiously, feeling that I was in the presence of a dangerous madman. He must have been mad, this—Indian I called him—that he had been able to so forget native superstition as to enter a place I had not yet penetrated, steal some of my treasures, and clothe himself as he had done. Yet I couldn't help admitting that his vestments somehow became him. But to all my questions he shook his head, nor did he move from his place. I tried him in Spanish, in as many different Indian dialects as I commanded—but his reply was always the same, a calm shake of the head.

I approached him, my hands extended to tear his finery from him. He did not move, did not draw back; but his eyes never left mine and . . . my hands fell to my sides without touching him!

I tried him in sign language; he watched the movements of my hands curiously, and his eyes came back to meet mine when I had finished.

He spoke at last, and I understood his words—and amazement such as I had never experienced before took possession of me.

His voice was soft, gentle as that of a woman, and the words came from his lips with the calm assurance of a man who has full command of himself. "I am Guatemozin! Lead me to Malinche!"

He did not ask me my name, nor did he seem to care about my identity. It was as if I didn't matter at all. I started to laugh at what he said; but something stayed me.

*Malinche* indeed! *Malinche* was the Aztec name of the Great Captain, Cortés, dead these four centuries, and *Guatemozin* with him. But I didn't laugh at him. There is something about madness that does not make for laughter. I dared not attack. I knew that madness would give him added strength, and that I might never live to see the finish of the fight—and I was tired from my many labors. So I turned abruptly, beckoning him to follow—a gesture I would have used to a stubborn child. I did not look back, but I knew from the sound that he followed.

But not for more than a yard or two!

He came up behind me, brushed me, brushed me aside imperiously,

and strode on ahead—as I had many times brushed aside peons who obstructed my path.

And so he preceded me to the road which led to the Capital City. I was glad of the opportunity to study him, and a queer rustling of the short hair at the base of my skull troubled me. The head of the bronze-skinned man turned slightly this way and that, as though he searched for landmarks. I saw his face in profile and it was a veritable mask of bewilderment, that bewilderment which crosses the face of a madman when you speak to him of something beyond his power to comprehend.

We came to the road and halted, while the stranger looked about him slowly.

But all his arrogance had gone from him, and by the time a car had deigned to notice us, and stopped to offer us a lift into the Capital City, the stranger was a perfect picture of painful amazement—amazement and no little fear. He watched the cars hurtle by, and he trembled as each one passed. Finally his eyes came back to me, as though I had been a friend, and there was a frightened question in them.

This fellow was determined to play out his madman's role to the bitter end, I told myself. The car that had stopped for us was a rickety flivver, and was already full of natives; but natives always believe that there is room for one or two more, even though they ride on the running-boards. These natives, well-dressed young Mexicans, stared at my companion in stark surprise. Then they began to laugh among themselves, pointing at the stranger, touching their foreheads with their forefingers.

I looked at the madman. He had drawn himself regally erect. Guatemozin—I called him that until I could learn his real name—stared at his tormentors for a moment only, and acted so swiftly that I almost failed to stop him. A dagger, jeweled of hilt, came into his hand from somewhere in the depths of his robe, and he sprang toward the flivver like a panther. I sprang at him, shouting; but the blow did not strike the Mexicans. It fell, yes, and the blade snapped off against the door of the car! My companion leaped back, staring at the car in bewilderment, and from the car to me.

But I knew he had stabbed at the car, and not at the men who rode inside it—and when nothing happened, when the rattling noise of the car's engine did not change in the least, he turned to me like a hurt child, and I took the dagger from his limp fingers. I spoke to the Mexicans sharply in Spanish, offering the only explanation I knew, and we were taken into the car and whirled toward the city.

I rode beside Guatemozin, and I studied him as we rode. He trembled

when the car jerked into motion; but his face became motionless on the instant, and he was as indifferent to our conveyance from that moment on as I was myself. It was a proud indifference, the haughty disdain of a prince of the blood.

But as we approached the city I saw his eyes roam this way and that, drinking in detail after detail. When we finally swung into Paseo de la Reforma, with its western extremity in the very shadow of Chapultepec, I read, deeply hidden underneath the stony expression, something so appalling that a weird terror came to grasp me by the throat with invisible fingers.

For that which I read in the face of Guatemozin was fear!

But mad as the man evidently was, there was greatness in him of a sort. His head lifted proudly after a moment, and while he observed everything about him as before, his eyes were mere slits beside his slender nose, whose nostrils quivered like those of a frightened thoroughbred horse; but which refuses to bolt because it is a thoroughbred.

And something struck me with the force of a blow. Guatemozin, whom I had found at the very edge of the city, had never before entered it. He had never seen an automobile, or men who dressed as these Mexicans and myself were dressed. Whence then, in God's name, had he come? There had been a certain eagerness in his face as we approached the city, and an ejaculation in a strange tongue burst from his lips when he saw the summer palace of the president at the crest of Chapultepec. And I realized that he knew Chapultepec; but had never seen the palace, nor any of the buildings at the crest of the monolith — and some of them had been built before this man had been born!

It was a puzzle. My mind went back to my meeting with Guatemozin — at the lip of the cleft. One moment I had been the only human being anywhere near. The next, I had looked back, to see Guatemozin, in all his silky finery, peering steadfastly into the dying sun — as though he had just come out of the bowels of the earth.

Out of the bowels of the earth!

My spine tingled as the thought repeated itself in my mind. But it was silly, and no scientist would have harbored such a thought for a moment.

But there was one thing the madness of Guatemozin could not explain; how did it happen that he had understood no language in which I tried to speak to him, and had finally spoken to me in that which had been the tongue of those dead and gone peoples who had etched



hieroglyphs around and about the opening in my just-discovered treasure house?

PEOPLE STARED AT US CURIOUSLY as Guatemozin followed me through the door of my hotel in the heart of the city. The people in the lobby of the hotel stared, too, and the manager started to come forward, his hand raised in protest, when I led Guatemozin on through, and up the stairs to my room. There was one thing of which I was sure Guatemozin, however mad he might be, bore me no ill-will. I knew, also, that he had none of that superstitious fear of my treasure house which had possessed the peons—and my decision followed my knowledge as surely as proof follows a theory based on solid fact. I would need a man to help me on my discovery. He did not need experience or technical knowledge. He need only understand the virtue of obedience, and in that I could instruct him. Guatemozin must be my aide in my future explorations into the ruins of Tenochtitlan.

He preceded me through the door of my room, and once across the threshold he paused to look about him. Then he turned to me, and a slight frown of annoyance touched his coppery forehead.

"Where," he said slowly in his ancient language, "is Malinche? I told you to take me to him."

Right now, I told myself, would be a good time for me to let this Guatemozin know what I intended. "Listen, Guatemozin," I said sternly, in Spanish, "whatever the reason for your silly pretense, it no longer exists."

He held up his hand imperiously. "Speak slowly," he said, "if you must use Spanish, for I learned but little of it!"

I choked down my wrath and continued: "Stop the silly pretense! You are no more mad than I am. Your name may be Guatemozin—but Malinche, if you mean the Great White Captain, has been dead these four hundred years! Guatemozin, your namesake, according to the last record we have of him, was a captive of Malinche. The Aztecs have vanished from the face of the earth, utterly destroyed by the Conquistadores. Montezuma—"

I saw a look of bitterness, the bitterness of despair, cross the face of the stranger as I mentioned Montezuma.

"Montezuma?" he said. "He is dead, too. I know that. He died like a slave in chains, a prisoner of Malinche, and then—and then Malinche and his men came forth from their fortress, and put the people of Montezuma to the sword; men, women, and children! But, to the

everlasting glory of the Aztecs, they defied the invaders until starvation had so reduced them that there was no resistance left in them — and those who died beneath the swords and lances of Malinche's men, died with hate in their faces, defying the white men with their last breath."

Guatemozin did not say it like that of course, for he had little Spanish. He paused at intervals to search for words, and when the Spanish word evaded him he used the language of the hieroglyphs. His face was stormy as he spoke. It made me recall accounts I had read of the final taking of Tenochtitlan, and the glorious spirit of the defeated natives of Anahuac, who fought on as long as their arms, weak from starvation, could lift and hurl a lance. There was that same glorious spirit to be seen in the face of this madman.

"Guatemozin," I said, "this way of living is all new to you. You can't go out with me, dressed like that. I shall send for a clothier, and a barber, and while they are making you over I shall talk to you of Malinche, of Tenochtitlan, and — of Guatemozin."

Since I had first spoken to Guatemozin in Spanish he had stood as one in a daze. The real Guatemozin, magically returned to the world after four hundred years, could not have shown more amazement than I saw in the face of this madman — who believed himself to be that Guatemozin.

Other surprises were in store. When new clothes were brought, and being fitted, and Guatemozin's hair was being trimmed to modern standards, I sat on my bed and told him of the vanished glory of Anahuac. I told him all that history had left to us of the past of the Aztecs, of the arrival in Tenochtitlan of the Conquistadores, riding their mailed horses, which they sat so nobly that the Aztecs thought horse and man one creature. I told him of the massacre of Aztec worshippers by the brutal Alvarado, of the taking of Montezuma, of his death, and his dying wish that Malinche take charge of his daughters. I told him of the fight on the causeway, of that impossible leap which Alvarado made to escape the lances of the natives, of the defeat of the Spaniards — how Cortes had wept that awful morning after *la noche triste*. I told him of the return of the Great White Captain, with fresh reinforcements of Indian allies, of the capture of Tenochtitlan and the slaying of the Aztecs who refused until the last to yield. And then, watching him narrowly as I spoke, I told him of the attempted escape of the chieftain, Guatemozin, and of his capture, and what he had said when they finally took him.

"I am Guatemozin! Take me to Malinche!"

Even as I repeated the words of the proud chieftain, who had sur-

rendered only to save his people from further slaughter, a cold chill caressed my spine—for I was remembering something. What had this Guatemozin said when I had discovered him at the door of my treasure house?

"*I am Guatemozin! Take me to Malinche!*"

And there was something else that bothered me: Guatemozin sat stolidly in the chair, submitting to the ministrations of the barber, to the deft hands of the clothier, as unconcernedly as any other man might have done; but as I told of the Conquest, speaking slowly as he had bidden me, he brought me to pause at intervals, and told me calmly of errors I had made in the telling! He spoke as one having authority . . .

Yet when I showed him the pages of a book he could read no word of it!

What a transformation when the clothier and barber had made an end of their labors. Guatemozin, with the square *tiburatti*, and the *panache* of greenish plumes, had vanished utterly, and in his place, listening quietly, but with his black eyes blazing, sat a young brown-skinned man whose every expression spoke of intelligence beyond the average.

As I say, he corrected me on points of history, that history pertaining to the Conquest; but when I told of that which the succeeding four hundred years had brought, of the strides which Mexico had made, of the rising of Mexico City upon the ruins of Tenochtitlan, I knew that I was speaking of things of which this man had never heard, though he listened to every word. His lips shaped the words of my speech, as though he made those words his own as they fell from my lips; and when I had finished he spoke softly.

"I understand, friend," he said. "Yes, I understand many things, the greatest of which is this: that the dead are not dead, really, and that the hands of those who fell before Malinche reach out beseechingly, pleading—yes, even across the centuries! For what are they pleading? I know—and I am Guatemozin!"

A strange speech surely, the speech of a madman; yet Guatemozin did not look to be mad. He had doffed his seeming madness with his *tiburatti* and his *panache* of plumes, and a quiet, calm-faced man had stepped into my room to take his place.

I sat up until midnight, telling him of Mexico. Once I offered him a cigar, which he regarded in puzzled wonder, masked admirably when I lighted up myself.

But after a time, when I had become accustomed to the strangeness of Guatemozin, and the man he had been when I found him had become

more or less of a dream, I grew weary of talking, though he sat in his chair, regarding me eagerly, wishing for me to continue.

"Guatemozin," I said, "I am tired. Moreover I am suffering with fever, if you haven't noticed it, and must get some sleep. Take that other bed when you are ready. You will need sleep, too, for tomorrow we have much to do."

He nodded quietly, but did not move. I doffed my clothes, slipped under my blankets, and watched Guatemozin through lowered lids. He did not move, and his eyes did not leave my face. Once, just before I fell asleep, he straightened, and lifted his clenched hands above his head. His lips moved, but I heard no words, and his face was a mask of malevolent hatred—which I *knew* was not for me. Then his eyes came back to my face, and held, while the face again became as expressionless as a graven image. That is my memory of him, sitting there, like a statue in bronze, watching my face, his eyes staring at my lowered lids. I had the odd fancy, just before I dozed off, that his modern clothing had slipped from him once more, giving place to the robe and the head-dress of plumes—and then I slept.

HOW LONG I SLEPT I have no way of knowing, nor the meaning of the subsequent sleep-waking transition. But when I awoke I had forgotten Guatemozin. I wondered at the burning light in my room, and guessed that I must have been so tired that I had forgotten it. I knew it was several hours before daylight, knew it subconsciously, though I never thought to look at my watch. I slipped from the bed, into my clothing, donned my heavy shoes, took my hat from the chair-back, and let myself out of the hotel. I didn't know why I did these things. My brain gave no conscious command to my limbs. I moved as one in a trance, as though each move had been ordained before my awakening.

The clerk of the hotel was asleep behind the desk. I called to him as I passed, loud enough that he should have heard me; yet he gave no sign, and I let myself out quietly into the deserted streets of the Capital City. When I found myself in Paseo de la Reforma I was neither surprised nor disturbed. This calm acceptance of something I should have wondered about, and didn't, went with me as I strode toward Chapultepec, and, after a space of time that seemed unbelievably short, found myself on a familiar trail that led into unpopulated territory, outside the Capital City. I turned and looked back. The lights of the city

were blurred with distance, and all about me was the mysterious silence of nighttime, and I was unafraid.

Nor was I surprised, when, through the gloom, I saw the pile of debris that my laborers had built up to excavate the ruins of my treasure house. Here I should have remembered Guatemozin; but I didn't. Why, I know not—and when I came to the lip of the cleft, whose bottom was filled with darkness, I did not hesitate. There was no telling what horrors of antiquity were hidden in the openings in the sides of the cleft, but fear had no place in me then, and I descended into the cleft in utter silence, with not even a bit of dislodged earth preceding me into the shadows. In the instant that I entered one of the openings, which I chose from several without a moment of hesitation, the world I had left behind me was non-existent, forgotten.

Inky blackness was all about me. But I could see for all that—could see the steps which my feet found instinctively, as though I had been here before. I came to the bottom of the steps at last, and the stairway seemed interminable, winding down and down into the very bowels of the earth. I halted at the bottom, looking about me—and knew that I stood on the floor of an ancient tomb. Dimly through the gloom I could see hieroglyphs like those at the top of the stairs, and the import of some of them bewildered me, I strode closer, the better to read them, and knew, as my fingers traced the aged pictures, that the world would be astounded at what I would have to tell when I was ready.

I circled the chamber, which was almost square, its corners facing the cardinal points of the compass, its roof lost in the darkness, and passed another opening, which gave on another winding stairway leading still farther into the depths of the earth. But I did not care to descend at the moment, not until I had further explored this chamber of the long since vanished dead.

In the center of the chamber, on a raised block of stone, around which were other hieroglyphs, was a long, narrow box, which gave forth a metallic sound when I thumped it with my knuckles. It was shaped like a coffin, and I wondered that no chill assailed me when I knew that this was a sarcophagus. Instead, as indifferently as though I were sitting down to a meal in the Capital City, I raised myself and tried to look into the top of the sarcophagus.

But there was a cover on it which moved beneath my hands when I exerted my strength. Inch by inch I forced the cover free, until it balanced on the edge of the sarcophagus—passed the center of balance,

tilted and clattered to the floor of the tomb with a noise that should have been heard in Chapultepec.

Once more I raised myself, peering into the depths of this casket which had held a human body.

But it was empty, save for a pair of sandals with golden soles. No bones, no slightest indication that a human body had rested here.

Bewildered at my failure to discover what I had hoped, I dropped to my knees before the lid of the sarcophagus, and studied the inscription on it.

*"I am Guatemozin, whose spirit watches forever over the destinies of Tenochtitlan!"*

It did not surprise me, that inscription, for I had been expecting it—had known what I would find before I had even entered the chamber that which should have ordinarily been gruesome. I seemed to accept it as a matter of course.

There was nothing further to be learned here and, moving again as though every step had been taken beforehand, I strode to that other opening and started down the stairs, seeing my way clearly, because of some light which came from I knew not where. That other stairway seemed long, long. I took more steps than I had taken from my hotel to Chapultepec, more than I had taken from Chapultepec to the door of my treasure house—which had become a treasure house indeed.

Down, down, ever down winding stairs that seemed endless—stone steps upon which my heavy shoes fell loudly, causing echoes to reverberate through distance my eyes could not penetrate. I paused, for the sound, and the echoes, bothered me—and wondered why I paused. Until, feeling a slight weight in my right hand; I lifted that hand to my eyes—and discovered that I carried the sandals I had found in the empty sarcophagus of Guatemozin! I did not smile to myself. I knew what was expected of me. I sat down on the step which first came under my body, slipped off my shoes, setting them aside, and donned the sandals with the golden soles.

Time passed as I descended. An hour. Two hours. Fifteen minutes. What does it matter?

I came to the foot of the stairway, though not surprised, I saw a door—a door through which came the light of the great outdoors—outdoors where the sun was shining.

And before I strode through that door I knew what I should see, or thought I did.

Would to God that I had turned back then, content with what I had already learned!

But I was a scientist, and believed in nothing that I could not feel, see, or prove. I strode to the door and through it . . .

To find myself in the midst of a multitude!

I turned dazedly and looked behind me. The door whence I had issued was the door of a sanctuary, at the crest of a *teocalli* of the Aztec war-god of the unpronounceable name! There was no mountain above the sanctuary, through whose heart that interminable stairway should have led downward, and the roof of the sanctuary was but a few feet above the door!

In an instant the world I knew had turned topsy-turvy, and out of it, like a creature from out of the Fourth Dimension, I had come striding—to find myself atop this pyramidal mound, a hundred and fifty feet above the floor of a valley whose outlines seemed strangely familiar. A valley cut and slashed by canals and waterways crowded with *piraguas* filled with bronze-skinned people. I had stepped into the midst of a crowd of two hundred or more, atop the *teocalli*, and right before me, over the bowed shoulders of half-nude worshippers, I saw the grim visage of Huitzilopochtli, the war-god, with his censer of steaming human hearts, the rough stones below him red with gore!

No one noticed me, though I stood in the midst of them. A red-handed priest stooped above the huge sacrificial block before the war-god, and his eyes, alight with the fires of brutal fanaticism, stared straight into the burning orb of the setting sun. Stretched on the hideous block, beneath the knife of the priest, was a naked human body, and as I watched, I called out—though no one seemed to hear me—and the priest looked down. His knife descended as his lips broke into a toneless monotonous chanting, and the body on the block quivered convulsively. No sound of screaming broke from the tortured lips of the victim—who quivered and became still, even as the red hand of the priest, redder still, and dripping now, rose once more . . . and held forth, toward the sun, the palpitating heart of a human being!

From the multitude on the *teocalli*, the valley beyond the pyramid, and those who rose silently along in the myriad of huge *piraguas*, arose the sound of chanting—chanting that was toneless and monotonous, like the chanting of the priest.

I strode through the crowd, nor had they yet seen me, until I stood at the side of the great block of sacrifice, the block with all its hieroglyphs, and looked down into the face of the man who lay there.

He was white, as white as myself!

In a frenzy of anger I turned to the priest, cursing him for a butcher; but he paid me no heed, and chanted on. Finally he placed the steaming heart beside those others I had already seen, and turned to look behind him.

Climbing upward to the flat summit of the *teocalli* came a terrible cavalcade! There were several, I counted five, white men, stripped to the waist, and they were urged ahead by priests with murderous whips in their hands. These white men wore coronals of plumes, and carried fans in their stiffening hands. As they clambered upward, they paused at intervals, at command of the priests, to take part in dances in honor of the *Aztec* god of war. At the crest of the *teocalli* they were stripped of their finery and one by one, with never an outcry or a murmur of protest, were stretched on the sacrificial stone—to deliver their beating hearts to the knife of the butcher-priest!

I saw their faces, just as I had seen the face of the first; and memory of them will never leave me.

I was sick, nauseated, and there was nothing I could do to aid the sufferers—and death, when it came, was merciful.

With a cry of horror, when my will could bear no more, I turned away and ran toward the door whence I had come. Blindly I ran, stumbling over the threshold. I stumbled again when I reached the stairway, for it was in darkness, and I had come in from the sunlight. I fell heavily, my head struck one of the stone steps, and merciful oblivion wiped out the horror which had been mine.

I opened my eyes in my hotel, and shuddered. It had been a dream then—thank God!

I turned and looked across at the other bed. It had not been slept in. The man who had called himself Guatemozin still sat in the chair as I had left him and, apparently, hadn't moved or slept. I called a cheery greeting to him, and slipped from my bed stiffly, sore from the labors of yesterday, and donned my clothes. This done, and sitting on the edge of my bed, I felt about for my shoes.

I did not find them. I stooped over them, looking about for them. My shoes had vanished; but where I had last seen them, side by side, just peeping from beneath the bed, was a pair of sandals with golden soles!

I guessed I screamed. I know that I looked at Guatemozin—and I know that his lips parted in a smile that was grim and unutterably cruel.

But before I could question him the door opened to admit the manager



of the hotel. He was wild with excitement, and he carried a morning paper which he extended to me. I paid little heed to his excited jabbering, for the paper had fallen open as he tendered it and, staring up at me from the front page were six pictures of men. And the faces were the faces of the men I had seen in my dream! The men who had been stretched, naked, across the block of sacrifice, before the hideous, Hutzilopochtli, to give up their hearts to the hand of the priest!

I read the story of how they had died. Read it hurriedly, skipping whole paragraphs, and stopped, at the end, stunned—as a man who has received a terrific blow between the eyes. The all had died the same way, during the night, and been found in the morning by friends or relatives. Their families, so the story said, were the oldest in the city. But strangest of all was mark, the same in the case of each of the six, which the autopsies showed on their bodies.

You have heard of the *stigmata*? You have marveled at the meaning which lies hidden under the bleeding marks in the feet and hands of people here and there, innocent girls usually, upon whom the significant marks appear, as though by a miracle? Marks of the nails in the hands and feet of the Christ, they say—and they upon whom these marks appear are regarded by the credulous as being divinely chosen.

There had been *stigmata* in the case of these six men who had died, too.

*A bleeding human heart on the left breast of each!*

I SENT OUT FOR NEW SHOES. Aside from the absurdity of wearing sandals, even sandals with golden soles, I couldn't bring myself to don these discovered beneath my bed. My dream of the night just passed had been too vivid, its details too stoudy etched upon the retina of my mind for me even to consider keeping those sandals by me. While I waited for the shoes I had breakfast sent up from the restaurant. The hotel manager himself brought it, and as he came in he glanced inquiringly at Guatemozin, evidently not recognizing in him the bronze-skinned one in square *titmali*, and *panache* of greenish plumes, who had entered with me last evening. I had a reason, too, for eating in my room. I wished to study Guatemozin, and I did not want to be embarrassed by the attention he would surely attract if he were to take his breakfast in public.

I wondered about his table manners. Yet there proved to be no need of worry. He ate with his fingers, true, but there was a daintiness about

his eating that seemed to shame me, with all my modern knowledge of the art of eating.

The manager came in again before we had finished, stood hesitantly inside the door, looking from me to Guatemozin, and back again. There was dread in his face, and fear. When I asked him what he wished to words came forth in a flood, as though he held them in check by force of a will that something unusual had broken and swept aside.

"It is just this terrible thing of the six great men who died," he replied. "Had there been but one, and he with the mark of the bleeding heart upon his left breast, all the Capital City would have been in turmoil, speculating upon the reason behind the strange *stigmata*. But there were six, from families whose history goes back to the fall of Tenochtitlan, and each of the six bore the bleeding heart on his left breast."

"Yes, yes," I interrupted. "I have read the morning paper, Don Julio. It is strange; but there is always an explanation for even those things which seem inexplicable at first glance."

"But," he asked, "what is the explanation here?"

He paused to cross himself devoutly before proceeding to offer his own explanation.

"There is evil in it somewhere, like a great shadow that no one can see. It is a shadow which hangs over all the Capital City, over all the country roundabout—and the people seem to know it. This is Thursday, not a religious day, yet all the churches are crowded with worshippers—men, women, and children, who kneel in silence before the shrines. They whisper the name of the *Virgen de Atlagracia*, invoking the divine power of My Lady of Guadalupe. They believe that the *stigmata* on the breasts of those who died, or were slain, have a vast and fearsome significance.

"Everyone is wondering who will be next, and what is the reason for the shadow that seems to hover over all the city?"

"Tush, tush, Julio! I cannot explain the *stigmata*; but it strikes me as being a bit silly. Isn't it possible that the reporter who wrote the story drew on his imagination, sacrificing the truth for the sake of a story that would stir the superstitious hearts of the populace?"

Don Julio shook his head, his lips grimly pursed. I noted that Guatemozin was watching us through narrowed lids and that, in spite of his lack of Spanish, he knew what we were discussing, and that it interested him vitally. How? I could not guess then—and even now I am reluctant to admit the truth of what later became so evident.

"I had intended working at my excavation, Don Julio," I said at

length. "I'll go into the city, and have a look at these dead aristocrats—and at the marks on the breasts, the existence of which I gravely doubt."

The manager left me then, and I turned to Guatemozin.

"You understood?" I demanded.

He nodded his head slightly in affirmation. "But the marks are there, friend!" he said.

"What! How do you know? Did you leave this room last night?"

He smiled slightly, a smile like the grimace of a bronze gargoyle, and neither denied nor affirmed.

Who was this strange personage? Whence had he come? How had he learned so much of the past of Anahuac?

And those questions brought others—some of which seemed foolish in the extreme.

What had become of my heavy shoes? How came this pair of sandals under my bed? They were like those Guatemozin had worn—yet Guatemozin's own sat side by side in the midst of the bundle formed by the discarded *tlimatl*, the *panache* of greenish plumes. An idea came to me. I stepped across and lifted the *tlimatl*, holding it to my nose, examining it with searching eyes. The odor which came from it was the odor I had found in the depths of my treasure house, and the *tlimatl*, which had once been white, was almost yellow with age, threatening to crumble under my rough fingers. The sun had been almost down when I had first seen that *tlimatl*, and I hadn't noticed the aged yellowness of its color. Guatemozin, as I studied these matters, my mind racing with strange thoughts, watched me indifferently, studying my face.

But that was foolish, worthy only of the most superstitious of peons. Huitzilopochtli had been real in my dream, too. Yet I knew that the statue of this hideous god reposed at this identical moment in the *Museo Nacional* in the heart of the Capital City. The statue, then, had not been real. It had been but a dream after all.

But still the faces of the six who had died were so hauntingly familiar . . . And I knew I had never seen one of those six in life!

I dropped the *tlimatl* and the *panache* of plumes as I came abruptly to a decision. I turned to Guatemozin.

"Stay here," I commanded, "until I return. I have certain things to do in the city, and when I return I wish you to go back with me to where I found you. By the way, Guatemozin, where did you come from? How did you get to my treasure house unobserved?"

For a long moment his black eyes stared straight into mine, and something in their depths caused my spine to tingle.

"I will await you here, friend," he said softly at length. "And whence did I come?"

He paused again, as though for dramatic effect.

"When you found me I was fleeing, in disgrace, from Tenochtitlan."

I snorted. What was there about this man who wasn't mad—yet persisted in his madness?

I turned and left him then.

It seemed that a blight indeed had fallen upon Mexico's Capital City. The sun that, in this season of the year, should have been goldening all the city and the countryside, was hidden from view beyond lowering black clouds. They seemed ready at a moment's notice to deluge the world with sheets of falling rain. Yet there was no odor of rain in the air.

The streets were almost deserted. All activities, commercial and otherwise, seemed to be at a standstill, and it did not occur to me to think of this as being anything but natural because of the greatness of the families which death had touched. There seemed something else behind it all, something deeply hidden, which I, being not of Mexico, and a scientist besides, could not comprehend.

There were groups of natives on some of the street corners, and they held the ends of their *serapes* up about their faces as though they feared recognition. They whispered fearfully among themselves, looking all around them at intervals, as if afraid of being overheard.

Something of the superstitious dread which I knew actuated the major portion of Mexico's population settled upon me as I strode through the city, and I could not shake it off. Those black clouds continued to hover, blotting out the blue sky and the sun, as though the hearts of the volcanoes all over Mexico had suddenly broken, filling the sky with their mingled pall of threatening smoke.

I came to the door of a cathedral and the door was open. No sound came forth, though I paused to listen, gazing into the darkened heart of the place of worship. Yet I knew that the cathedral was crowded. I drew a deep breath and stepped inside. The place was redolent of many odors, odors emanating from the bodies of unwashed humanity, tight-packed throughout the cathedral. Men who had perhaps never come to worship since their baptism, knelt on their *serapes* on the aged floors, their heads bowed, their right hands ever and anon making the sign of the cross before their motionless bodies. Women were everywhere, among the men; some carried newborn babes at their breasts.

I strode through the crowd, and men and women leaned to right and

left to let me pass. But they did not look up, though they sensed that I was an outlander, and gave me that right of way which I had come to expect as my due.

Just what I intended I did not know myself. I wished to warn these people—of something. To explain to them, from my fund of scientific knowledge, that they were frightening themselves needlessly, allowing senseless superstition to take possession of souls which their brains should have commanded. That, I suppose, is what I intended, for I moved forward until I was almost in the vanguard of the worshippers, where I turned to regard the simple natives.

But they were not all peons! Here and there, kneeling among the rest, I saw aristocratic *señoritas*, black *mantillas* draped over high-backed combs glistening with brilliants. I was amazed at this, but even more so to see, among the silent crowds, Spanish business men crossing themselves devoutly with the rest of the people.

And then I raised my hand to speak.

As though my gesture had been a signal, every head among the worshippers was lifted, every eye peered at me—there was fear in the depths of every one! Why? Why? What was there about me to cause fear?

Then I saw that they did not look at me, but through and over me, as though they stared at something high above me, and behind. And, a new dread taking possession of me, I turned slowly and heavily, as though only an indomitable will had made the turning possible.

For a moment I did not see it. Later I wondered why, since it was all so plain.

Right before my eyes, and before the eyes of the worshippers, that part of the cathedral opposite the open door was slowly disintegrating, fading away, as a picture fades on the screen. And, like a picture still, there grew out of the ruins of that portion of the cathedral another picture, thin and frail as a fairy gossamer.

It was a picture of another place of worship. A place of worship which had been old before the cornerstone of this cathedral had been laid.

It was dim, true, and unreal; but unmistakable.

There was the *teocalli*, with the low-roofed sanctuaries squatting on the pyramidal crest. There was the statue, faint, but its outlines visible and traceable, of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of war! There were the priests, their long hair flying rearward over their mantles, their right hand grasping the knives of sacrifice, gazing into the eye of an

invisible sun, their left hands holding forth the offering to the oldest god of them all — and the offering was a human heart!

But, and I thanked God for that, there were mists whirling about the feet of the priests, mists which swirled and eddied to the heights of their waists, hiding from view the block of sacrifice — and the hideous things I knew we would have seen had the swirling mists not been there to cloak them.

Just a moment I saw it, and it must have been more than a dream for I knew that every worshipper in the cathedral saw it too. Then the vision had vanished, like smoke that is blown away by the wind; and through the smoke, coming out of it swiftly as though to aid in banishing the horror of the scene, appeared the cathedral once again in its entirety!

And bedlam was suddenly unleashed in the house of worship!

I turned and looked back. Men and women were rocking from side to side. The *serapes*, which had been placed on the floor to save tender knees from the harsh hardness of the stones, were lifted and used to cover the faces of the devotees, and through these singular coverings, rising like the sound of an approaching wave, came the lamentations of the kneeling people.

*"¡Ay, Dios! Madre de Maria! Virgen madre de Jesus! Guardese sus suplicantes!"*

And so I left them there, wailing, while I made my way to the street, surprised to find, when I passed through the doorway of the cathedral, that I was running at top-speed.

For a deep-rooted conviction, not yet well enough analyzed to be a conviction in the usual sense, had taken possession of me . . .

Somehow, some way, I was responsible for the terror which stalked through the streets of the city of Mexico! This terror that overshadowed all the land, that squatted like a hideous vulture at the crest of Chapultepec, and that went with the devoutest of worshippers into the temples of their gods!

And so, as I ran, I called on my own God, whom I had many times denied — called on Him on voiceless whispers — begging Him to show me the way, to take upon Himself a little of the burden I had unwittingly shouldered.

How did I realize this responsibility?

Among the priests in that eerie vision in the heart of the cathedral, proud and haughty, taking no part in the sacrifice, yet with the very spirit of him commanding it, and approving every brutality, I had

gazed for a single instant into the bronze features of Guatemozin the Indian! He had been once more decked out regally in his square *tibmatti* of snow-white cotton, with the *panache* of greenish plumes hanging down his straight back!

It was unbelievable. Yet every worshipper in the cathedral had seen the vision. But, had they all, as had I, seen the face of Guatemozin? Had they seen his firm lips shape themselves into a distorted vengeful smile? I didn't think so, I hoped they hadn't, yet feared they had.

But I had other things to do. It required many hours. I went to the homes of each of the six who had died, demanding to see the marks on the left breast of each. I was granted admission. I saw, and was convinced, impossible as it appeared.

I returned to my hotel, dazed, not knowing what to think.

THE MANAGER OF THE HOTEL had the evening paper. He showed it to me without a word, because he did not grasp its meaning. I read, nor did I understand, though dread settled upon me again and would not leave me.

Some time during the night just passed, the night whose shrouding darkness had hidden the death of the six-aristocrats, the statue of Huitzilopochtli had disappeared from the *Museo Nacional*!

In every church in the Capital City, save the cathedral which I had entered, at almost the same hour of the day, a strange figure had appeared out of nowhere to stand for a moment, silently, his face and eyes a bronze mask of accusation, in the very midst of the worshippers! The figure, the story said, had worn a square *tibmatti* of white, yellowish-white cotton, and the head had been adorned with a *panache* of greenish plumes! The figure had stood, been noted, and vanished — no one knew where or how.

I saw something different in the story than the manager had seen. He was thinking only of the madman who had followed me into the hotel last evening. I was thinking . . .

But I scarce knew what to think . . .

I do not believe I was surprised when I entered my room.

Guatemozin was gone. So were the vestments in which I had first found him.

And the modern clothing I had purchased for him lay in a heap before his vacant chair!

I could no longer deny my responsibility. The absence of Guatemozin, whom I had forbidden to leave the room, stunned me with its import.

I slumped down on the side of my bed, dazed bewildered. Here was something outside my scientific knowledge, something that no rule I had ever learned could account for or explain.

Guatemozin had gone, certainly, dressed in his robes of rank, and it was not too much to believe that he might have wandered into one of the many churches in the city. And the superstitious natives seeing him, with the knowledge of last night's dreadful happenings fresh in their minds, had spread the story of his appearance. The story had grown as stories grow in Latin America, all out of proportion in its hurried passage from mouth to mouth, so that his appearances in more than one place at the same identical moment was a foregone conclusion. Your Latin American believes in the supernatural, even though it is a figment of his own ignorant brain.

So I told myself, and still was not satisfied with my explanation.

That vision I had seen in the cathedral I had visited the night before.

How could I explain that? In the light of certain thoughts that persisted in intruding themselves upon my mind, I was beginning to believe that I, at least, could hazard a guess at the significance of the vision. For the *teocalli* of the Aztec god of war, if legend and history spoke truly, had once stood on the very ground now occupied by the cathedral.

Yet the conclusion, inescapable as it seemed, appeared silly, even as it thrust itself forcibly home in my consciousness.

But where was Guatemozin? Who was Guatemozin? What had become of the body that should have rested in the sarcophagus of the long dead chieftain — Guatemozin?

My brain whirled with dreadful thoughts. A belief in something I knew to be utter impossibility was entering into and abiding with me. I was a scientist whose science was failing me. I was but the equal, after all, of the humblest peon in all Mexico, naming supernatural the things I could not understand or explain.

I sat on the bed, my head in my hands, while perspiration bathed my body until my clothes were damp with it. I forgot my raging fever. I forgot my treasure house, except to curse the unnameable something its opening had unleashed upon Mexico. I forgot everything . . .

Everything except Guatemozin, the mysterious, the impossible — who even now was somewhere in the city, stalking through unfamiliar streets like a composite ghost of all the vanished Aztecs.

Like a flash came back to me the inscription I had read on the tomb of the chieftain in my dream! "I am Guatemozin, and my spirit watches forever over the destiny of Tenochtitlan!"



Tenochtitlan! Capital City of the Montezumas, rulers of all Anahuac!

Tenochtitlan! Upon whose ruins had risen this very city in which I now sojourned. I prayed my God for an explanation that would not drive me mad!

I remembered dully that I had not eaten. I sent for food. The sight of it nauseated me, and I sent it back untasted.

I flung myself down on my bed, but found no rest for body or spirit. What could I do to undo the trouble I had caused? How could I avert the catastrophe which I felt to be threatening the City of Mexico?

Catastrophe?

I shuddered. I had read too much of history. I was remembering always, since the departure of Guatemozin, that even when Tenochtitlan had finally fallen, and the defeated remnants of what had been a mighty horde of Aztecs had left the city according to the terms of the surrender, even the babes in arms had shaken tiny fists at the victorious Conquistadores. The Aztecs had been defeated, and their doom was sealed; yet their spirits were unquenched. Even then, they might have turned back for a final attack upon the white murders had not starvation rendered them unable to lift their blood-rusted weapons.

I had read, though had not believed, that the spirits of those who had died by violence, with snarls of hate on their lips, with murder in their hearts, were held in thrall, earthbound, crying out through unrequited ages for vengeance.

Could it be possible . . .

My door opened. The hair at the base of my skull rustled. But it was not Guatemozin who entered. It was the hotel manager, his usually swarthy face gray as ashes with fear, and behind him, entering my room affrightedly, as though to take comfort from my presence, came his servitors—his waiters, and his chambermaids.

"Your pardon, *señor*," said the manager hoarsely, "for our intrusion. But we labor under deadly fear. The city is as silent as a church, and clouds hang ominously over Chapultepec—and they are motionless. We are afraid, *señor*, and beg that you will not drive us away."

Oddly enough, the fear of these people caused a little of my own to vanish. I saw that they were indeed afraid, with a fear that was almost deadly, that robbed them of the power of speech—save only the manager, who would have talked on the hangman's scaffold.

"But what can I do, Don Julio?" I asked.

Surreptitiously, hoping that they did not notice, I wiped the perspiration from my forehead.

"You can talk to us," he said. "You can help us sit the night away."

"But why do you not take to your rooms, so that sleep may make the hours like fleeting minutes?"

"Do you forget," was the soft reply, "that the six who died passed away during the hours of darkness—presumably while they slept? No, friend, there will be no sleep for us. The monster who is causing this shadow which hovers over us will not harm you, and we are safe at your side."

"The monster? What do you mean?"

"The man in the white robe and the head-dress of green plumes!"

I started as the manager put my own thoughts into words.

"But why do you call him monster? And why should I escape the doom which you believe he is bringing to Mexico City?"

The reply came from an unexpected quarter, from one of the chamber-maids. She was a half-witted negress, who passed her days away as the butt of jokes originated by her fellow employees of the hotel. I turned as she spoke. The girl had been squatting on her haunches just inside my door, mumbling to herself, speaking in the bastard Spanish which is the language of the poor. Saliva left dirty foam on her thick lips, and her eyes gazed away into space as though she saw nothing save distance, through even the stout walls of the holstelry, as though she were under the spell of some weird self-hypnosis. But when she spoke it was not the voice of the half-wit, and the manager jumped and muttered curses, while his remaining employees rocked to and fro, their eyes wide with terror.

"He will not harm you, *senor*—because you delivered him from bondage."

I gasped, and perspiration bathed my body anew. The girl spoke with calm conviction, as one having authority. She believed what she said, and though it filled us all with breathless awe, we believed her, too. I gulped frantically, searching my aching brain for words, unwilling to lose poise for an instant in the presence of people whom I looked upon as far below me in all things. But before I could speak the negress, rocking to and fro, still with her eyes gazing into space, wide and staring, spoke again, her voice a monotonous singsong that chilled the spines of all who heard her.

"The blood of the people of Anahuac cries out for vengeance," she intoned. "I hear the sound come forth from every vanished *azotea*. I hear it thunder over all the land from the *teocallis* of the Aztec gods. I hear the vanished people chanting their war-cries. I hear the whispers in the wind. Out of the past, along the corridors of centuries, the wailing of the vanished dead come down to me—as ghostly hands reach down for

vengeance across the space of half a thousand years! The dead who died by violence have wandered over their ravished strongholds, uneasy yet powerless to work their will, because they lacked a greater will to lead them. *That leader has been found*, and the shades of those whom the white men destroyed are massing for the conflict. Mexico is doomed! She has grown fat with the passing of the centuries, fat with that which is born of greed and idleness! I see the dead of today, of tomorrow, of many tomorrows, lying thickly in the silent streets—and there are livid crimson marks upon the bodies of them all!"

The negress paused in her chanting—for it was a chant—of singsong words, as though she repeated something she had learned, parrot-like, by rote. Her Spanish was faultless; this from an uneducated woman who could neither write her name or count the sheets she laundered. The manager was tottering on his feet his lips moving without sound. He swayed toward the girl, his trembling hand lifted to strike—the motive, for the act going back perhaps to long-dead rulers in the Old World, who slew the bearers of evil tidings. But I stayed him with lifted hand, searching the set face of the hall-wit.

"Wait!"

For the lips of the negress were moving again, as unaccustomed words strove to get through. "I hear the whispers in the wind," she said.

And softly lest I disturb her, I put a question—a statement that was more question than statement. "But there is no wind."

The hand of the negress lifted, beseeching silence. "Hark!" she said. And we all grew statue-like to listen.

From outside, muted by distance, but unmistakable, came the sound as of a high wind approaching! High and whining wind, like the voice of a hurricane, growing louder and more menacing as the moments passed into Eternity, taking with them the last vestiges of our hopes. I saw the natives lick dry, parched lips with suffening tongues. We listened, though, unable to move or cry out, as the wind swung into the Vale of Anahuac and swooped down upon the City of Mexico like a horde of avenging angels. Far away, as the vanguard of the wind struck the edge of the city, we could hear the doors of houses that were not already locked bang shut, while the shutters on distant windows slapped like the clatter of machine guns. Through the wind, mere threads of eerie sound, came the shrieks of people who groveled behind their doors, and prayed in frenzy to the god they trusted.

I lifted my hand again, and the moaning of the manager and his employees stilled as at a signal.

"Who are you, woman?" I asked the half-wit negress, softly.

"I?" she questioned, and her eyes did not once meet my own. "I am Maria de Estrada!"

I started again, and looked at the manager. And, realizing that I mutely asked a question, he shook his head.

"Her name," he declared, "is Dominga Tatis."

"And her family," I pressed, "is it old? Is she descended from any great ones of the city's past?"

The manager shrugged his shoulders and pursed his wan lips. "Who knows the blood which course through the veins of the gutter-mongrels?" he said.

"But there may be blood in her from the aristocracy, remote though the connection may have been?"

Again he shrugged his shoulders.

Maria de Estrada!

There had been a Maria de Estrada with Malinche upon his evacuation of Tenochtitlan, and the Amazonian woman, if legend did not lie, had wielded a broadsword as valiantly as any man, hewing her own way through the Aztec hordes.

But now the woman spoke again. "Hark!" she said.

The wind was all about us now, possessing all the city, striving to thrust cold fingers in upon us through the shaking shutters of my room. But, how I know not, I knew that what she heard was not the wind — and there was nothing but the wind to hear. The ears of her strange new being had caught at some sound even through the wind, and none of us had captured it as yet. And I knew before I heard it that the icy hand of dread would close a little tighter upon the hearts of every one of us.

"What is it, Maria?" I questioned.

"The great drum of the god of war!" she chanted.

Then, when the wind died down for the briefest of moments, I heard it — a mighty peacan of dreadful warning.

Boom! Boo-oom! Boom!

Slow measured strokes, delivered by an invisible hand, that set all the atmosphere to vibrating, as the sound rolled out of the night, through the lull of the wind, in volume vast enough to bridge even the weary miles to Puebla, to Jalapa, and Vera Cruz.

The great drum of the god of war!

What else was needed to complete the terror which was ours? We felt the hand of death come close upon us, opening and closing, as though to clutch us to its breast.

Boom! Boo-oom! Boom!

And then the wind came back, wiping the sound away, as wind steals the song from the lips of the singer.

But I knew!

I could hear the sound roll down the centuries, four of them, each an hundred years of time, each greater than the lifetime of any normal man. Of all that frightened company I alone felt that I knew the significance of the voice of the great drum of the Aztec god.

For when Tenochtitlan had been the wonder of Anahuac, there had been a drum in the heart of the *teocalli* of Huitzilopochtli with a voice like that . . .

And its voice was heard only when great and dire calamity threatened the golden kingdom of the Aztecs!

"Maria!" I said. "Maria!"

"I hear," she said.

"Tell me, woman, who am I?"

She did not look at me, but she had heard my question, for her black brows were knitted in thought. I fancied, oddly, that I could see a fairer skinned woman, behind that blackness, dressed in shining mail, with a broadsword in her hand!

"You . . . you . . ." She hesitated in her answer for the first time since I had asked her questions. "You are . . . no! No! You are *not* Malinche!"

Of course I wasn't; but for me there was inspiration in what she said. My fear fell from me like a cloak discarded, and I found myself standing, looking down upon these people who put their trust in me.

"But I am!" I said—and laughed at my own absurdity. "I am Malinche—if only until this calamity which threatens has safely passed. And you," pointing to the manager, "are Alvarado! Mine is the place to command, yours the duty to obey. These others here, my Alvarado, are soldiers of the King! Take them, Alvarado, and lead them forth—and when you find this Guatemozin, and Maria will lead you to him, take him and bind him with chains, and bring him captive to me!"

The manager stiffened as I gave my orders and his ashen face became a shade more nearly approximating my own whiteness of skin. But into my words he read a deep significance, comprehended a little

of the vastness, yea, and the hopelessness, of my plan. He straightened, looked me squarely in the face, and his hand half lifted, as if he would have saluted his commander. He faced about, and his men servants with him.

The door leaped open under his hand, closed behind him, and only the whimpering women, save Maria, who, still as one in a trance, had led the way for her master, remained in the room with me.

My own plans were hazy at best. But this I knew. I must go to the cleft I had made beyond the outskirts of the Capital City. I must go even though the storm, in all its fury, tear me limb from limb—and there, in the heart of the tomb, I must find a way to frustrate the vengeance of Guatemoxin. There must be a way, and if any there be, mine must be the will to find it. That much I owed the land of my sojourn—for my desire for knowledge which is not found in books had been the cause of the terror which stalked by night through the Capital City!

I owed a debt, and even though its payment might be tardy, and could not give back the lives of the six who had gone, I still must make that payment if there yet were time.

Having somewhat persuaded the cowering women that there was no longer any danger, I dismissed them, and they huddled out of the room to congregate elsewhere.

I TURNED TOWARD THE BED, seeking heavier clothing, knowing that an icy chill was in the wind outside, because its breath came through the shutters with each roaring gust that passed my bed room window. I turned, and halted, wavering, listening.

It was not the drum I heard. It was not a voice. But deep within me spoke a still small voice of warning. "Stay, friend! We have no quarrel with you—yet!" I brushed my hand over my eyes, dazed and wondering.

I turned again and looked about me. I was not in my bedroom, nor was I standing erect. I was lying at an angle, slumped down on a stony spiral stairway, against one step of which my head had struck in falling. I remembered now—and wondered where lay the borderline between reality and dreadful dreams!

I rolled to my side and looked behind me.

There was the door of the sanctuary in which I had fallen, and through it I saw the sunlight of the out-of-doors—and beyond the doorway, unmarred by rail or battlement, I beheld the edge of the *teocalli*, with only yawning space below!

I staggered erect, my right hand going to the wound my head had got in falling, and moved toward the door, dazedly, as one who dreams. I had thought the sound which I heard to be the thumping of unbearable pain inside my aching head; but on the instant I knew that this was not true.

It was the calamitous booming of the war-god's drum! The toneless chanting of a myriad of people! Out of the Fourth Dimension I had come a second time—to listen, to observe . . .

And to avert catastrophe!

It is odd perhaps that when I dreamed I could recall all that had happened to me since the coming into my life of the mad Guatemozin; odder still that when I was awake I remembered my terrible dreams in every detail. It was as though I did not dream at all. It was as though, by a miraculous transition, I moved from one sphere into another, almost at will, or rather, whether or not I willed it. When I was awake I was a scientist in the year 1931; when I dreamed I was an observer in ancient Tenochtitlan, of over four hundred years ago—and between the dream and the reality there was no passage of time, and I could not tell one from the other. I closed my eyes on modern Mexico City and was in ancient Tenochtitlan, and I returned to Mexico City by closing them again.

I will not try to explain this.

And then, too, there was the connecting link between two periods in history so widely separated.

Guatemozin? But the real Guatemozin was dead, and the other Guatemozin was a madman.

So I told myself; but it was as if I addressed myself in some black cavern, where echoes came out of the darkness to mock my words.

I had fallen, in the first dream, and bumped my head on a stairway. I had regained consciousness on the identical spot many hours later, and during that passage of hours I had been a scientist in the heart of the City of Mexico, separated from the observer in Tenochtitlan by almost half a thousand years.

My brain reeled as I strove for explanations that were logical.

Then, knowing by previous experience that the people of old Tenochtitlan would heed me not, I passed through the door of the sanctuary, and wended my way through the butcher-priests before the statue of the hideous Aztec god of war. I stood on the edge of the *teocalli*, gazing out across the Vale of Anahuac, with the golden city of Tenochtitlan at my feet.

For now I knew the city, and knew that, could the observer in Tenochtitlan but have seen with the eyes of the scientist of 1931, I should have been able to perceive, superimposed upon Tenochtitlan, coinciding with it throughout, yet larger by far—the modern City of Mexico! I could not see it, for I stood on the *teocalli* in the heart of Tenochtitlan, and the City of Mexico was as yet undreamed of.

A nightmare of paradoxes. Yet what else could I think?

Stretching away from me in all directions was the aged city whose secrets I had sought to read in the ruins where I had discovered the mad Guatemozin. There were the canals and waterways, with the bright sun turning their waters to pathways of shimmering gold. Up and down the pathways, riding in state in *piraguas* of many sizes and designs, were countless thousands of the people who ruled Anahuac before the Spaniards came. And they were not ghosts, for ghosts are not of the flesh, and do not sing in the voices of the living. They were living people, little statues in bronze, and their chanting rolled like a flood of sound throughout the Vale of Anahuac.

They lived! I was gazing upon the Tenochtitlan of Montezuma, the Tenochtitlan which was the city Cortes first knew, before his mailed fists and heavy heels destroyed it, putting *azoteas* to the torch, and tearing asunder the stones from the *teocallis* and the sanctuaries, before he had trod through the ancient city with the flaming torch of massacre.

But on the crest of the *teocalli* on which I stood, its thunderous diapason causing my body to tremble with the evil of its import, throbbed and thundered the great drum which spoke to all Anahuac of approaching calamity! What was the expected calamity, and whence would it come?

I had not long to wait, and that which next occurred told me that I had made a slight error when I had thought this to be Tenochtitlan before the Spaniards came. For Cortes had been here, and had gone. And when I saw, coming up the winding stairway, a group of white soldiers in shining mail, I knew that Alvarado led his soldiers to the crest of the *teocalli* to witness the Aztec annual festival in honor of the war-god—and that Cortes was absent from the city to settle his score with Panfilo de Narvaez.

I had read history, and knew what to expect. Yet I knew that no warning I could give would avert the calamity which was descending upon the Aztecs with the apparently friendly approach of Alvarado. For, though this thing had already happened—back in the City of Mexico—four hundred years ago, it had not yet, in this place, come to pass.



I would have been changing the course of history already written had I been able to give them the warning I knew that none would heed.

The Aztecs, in all their gala finery, assembled, six hundred and more of them, and lost themselves at once in dancing, chanting, and their strange discordant minstrelsy, while Alvarado and his soldiers looked on amusedly.

The Aztecs were oblivious of Alvarado and his soldiers, whom they regarded as friends.

And Alvarado and his men, as I had known they would do, when there seemed no danger to themselves, because the Aztecs were unarmed and wore no armor, fell upon the celebrants with drawn swords. They cut them down with savage brutality, with neither pity nor compunction. Those who fled downward to the gates of the *teocalli's* courtyard were caught upon the pikes of soldiers who stood guard without, and the massacre was complete.

The Aztecs were dismayed by the catastrophe, and I could understand why, on the instant, they had grown to hate the Spaniards with a hate that would never die.

Then, over the heads of the multitudes who had just witnessed the slaughter of the very flower of Aztec nobility, I saw the outer gates of Tenochtitlan, where Cortes, having defeated Narvaez and won over his soldiers, was just returning to make good his conquest of Anahuac.

The utter and heartless brutality of Alvarado had brought catastrophe, and the throbbing of the drum of the war-god was the answer of the Aztecs. So that Cortes, returning as he thought to find a peaceful Tenochtitlan in which he might rest for a while after his conquest of Narvaez, was greeted with sounds of tumult such as he had never heard before.

I knew how he had met Alvarado, and had expressed his displeasure at what the butcher had done. But Cortes was a soldier, as was Alvarado, and his sympathies, whatever his displeasure must certainly be with Alvarado.

Montezuma, then, was no longer Cortes' host, but his prisoner, and Tenochtitlan with all its priceless treasures was given to the Spanish looters.

The city rose in arms as the Spaniards hurried into their defenses, and Tenochtitlan was beginning its hopeless effort to drive back the invaders to the sea. Cortes and his men had looted the Aztec temples, had made Montezuma, whom his people worshipped as divine, a prison-

er. Few there were of all the Aztecs who had not suffered insults at the red hands of the *conquistadores*.

Cortes, entering the city warily, wondering mightily at the coolness of his reception, was not long left in doubt. He reached his defenses and joined his comrades in arms.

In the meantime a veritable flood of Aztec warriors, who could never forgive the treachery of Alvarado, filled all Tenochtitlan, laying siege to the defenses of the Great White Captain, Malinche.

And I? I stood on the crest of the *teocalli*, a visitor from the future, and watched a doomed nation sell its life-blood dearly.

Then, like a picture on the screen, events followed each upon the heels of the other with indescribable celerity—even between whose occurrence I knew there had been lapses of many hours if history did not lie.

The Aztecs pressed right up to the base of the Spanish stronghold, and arrows and lances, each dispatched upon its mission of death on the sender's prayer to whatever gods were his, were a veritable cloud across the sky. Those weapons were sent with the genius of those who knew the art of war, and their sharpened points sought out the very joints and weaknesses in the armor of the Spaniards. The Aztecs, when the white man answered their fire, fell before the Spanish stronghold in scores and hundreds, until the piles of their bodies were everywhere. Yet over the piles, each Aztec pushed forward his brother-in-arms in rear, and the tide of battle flowed all about the defenses of Cortes. Montezuma, a fine figure of a regal chieftain, Cortes' prisoner, appeared upon the battlements and, with arms outstretched in protest, begged his warriors to desist—if only because they wished to see him live. And, even though his own people cried out upon him, calling him a traitor to his land, they loved him still, and drew away. But they had not given up their revenge. They sat down before the Spanish stronghold and prepared to let starvation work its will with the white murderers.

And behind me, at the crest of the *teocalli* of Huitzilopochtli, boomed and rolled the thunder of the great drum of calamity!

It was only a respite. Cortes could not hold his position in the face of starvation and knew it, and though I could see through the walls of his defenses, I knew that, with the drawing back of the Aztec hordes, the Great White Captain had gathered his officers about him to discuss the retreat from his beleaguered castle.

After a time the Great Captain himself, whom I knew from the hauteur of his carriage, came to the crest of his battlements and asked to hold converse with the enemy. The chosen representatives of the Aztecs, under

arms, approached the stronghold to talk with Malinche— and Malinche's words were the fatal error that ushered in catastrophe. I could see him there plainly, and his words came clearly across to me.

"This," he said, "have you brought upon yourselves by your rebellion. If you do not lay down your arms and return once more to your obedience, I will make of your city a heap of ruins, and leave not a soul alive to mourn over it!"

I moved closer to the *teocalli's* crest to hear the answer of the spokesman. Proudly, disdain for his enemy in his face, the Aztec leader made reply.

"It is true, Malinche, what you say. You have destroyed our temples, broken our gods in pieces, and our countrymen have fallen before your soldiers like ripe grain before the hail. And others yet will fall, perhaps—but we will give a thousand lives, and give them gladly, to take the life of a single white man! Look about you, at our terraces, along our streets. They are thronged with warriors as far as your eyes can see. Our forces are scarcely diminished, while your own force is lessening hour by hour. You die of hunger and sickness. You have no water or provisions. You are doomed, Malinche! We have destroyed the bridges which you must cross to gain your freedom—and there will be all too few of you to glut the vengeance of our gods!"

A hail of arrows from the Aztecs put an end to the truce, and the Spaniards took refuge in their defenses. The Aztecs then drew back to sit like cats before mouse-holes, knowing that Cortes and his men were trapped.

The huge drum behind me grew silent, as did all the city, bringing in a great feeling of depression and expectation—a sensation which reminded me of that vast depression I had left behind me in the City of Mexico.

The Vale of Anahuac was waiting, while within the stronghold, Cortes was preparing his forces to begin the retreat.

"The melancholy night" was approaching.

It was difficult for me to grasp it all, as may well be imagined.

I knew that when night came in Tenochtitlan it would be daylight in Mexico, and vice versa. And that I had but to sleep a moment to return to the city of my sojourn.

And night, silent, imponderable, menacing as a great cat preparing to spring, descended upon Tenochtitlan. There now were no Aztecs on the *teocalli* on whose crest I stood, save only a few who stood, or slept, within the sanctuary at my back. But there was one, immovable as a

statue, who took his stance before the great war drum of the Aztecs, hand uplifted, ready to send the dreadful summons pealing forth.

Silence everywhere, as though everyone waited, with bated breath.

Suddenly I saw the men of Cortes come forth like ghosts, the staunch mail glistening through the darkness, flecks of eerie light flashing on bared weapons held in readiness. One by one, moving silently, they came out upon the causeways, the horses prancing side by side, their heavy hoots ringing like the clash of cold steel on a frosty morning, while in the van, protecting the helpless sick and wounded, marched the foot-soldiers, and they too had their weapons poised.

They reached the end of the first causeway, to find that it had been destroyed and that a great gap separated the white men from the safety of the mainland; and this breach was watched by Aztec sentries, who raised shrill cries of alarm at the first sight of the silent Spaniards.

Instantly, from behind me, so suddenly that I started and almost fell from the crest of the *teocalli*, burst the thunderous rolling of the drum of all calamity!

The silent city of Tenochtitlan became history's most awful bedlam. From everywhere, gliding out of the darkness near at hand and from afar, Aztec warriors in canoe and *piragua* broke into view. While their harsh cries went winging across all Anahuac, the intrepid Indians made for the causeway from all directions, while their arrows and lances fell among the Spaniards like hail.

Many of the Spaniards crossed that beach in that first causeway; yet many more remained there, broken and dying, or already dead, their bodies filling the breach to form a bridge to safety for Cortes and his soldiers who survived.

But this was only the beginning. There were many causeways yet to traverse, and each had been broken and destroyed to cut off the retreat of Malinche and his brutal follower, Alvarado. Hundreds and thousands of Aztecs met the Spaniards at each breach, clung to them, fighting, on the remnants of the causeways, hurled lances at them from *azoteas* near and far, filled the sky of night with clouds of hurtling arrows. Hundreds and thousands of the Aztecs paid for their bravery with their lives, and other hundreds, other thousands, came out of the darkness to take the places of the fallen.

It was more than human strength could bear; yet the Aztec bore it, and so did the Spaniards, because they must either bear or perish.

But history has already told the story, and we know that Cortes won his way to Popotla with a handful of his men. While the Aztecs drew off

to gather up the spoils Malinche had left behind him in retreat, the white men were granted a breathing space, and Cortes was given time to reckon up his losses.

They were many, and the proud Cortes forgot his pride to weep in sorrow as his soldiers, with blank places in their files to right and left, marched past him, leaving Tenochtitlan, unconquered for the time being.

*La noche triste*, the night of sadness, had come and gone, and in Tenochtitlan death and destruction were everywhere. In Popotla, sorrow already forgotten, Cortes was planning his return, and the utter destruction of the Aztecs.

The drum behind me was silent, with the silence of death.

And from out of the heart of Tenochtitlan, up to where I stood, came a never-to-be-forgotten odor—the odor of decaying flesh, of moldering mortality—like the breath from a fetid tomb that has been closed for centuries.

Yet, knowing history, I knew that this was not the end; that Malinche would return to make good his promise to leave Tenochtitlan a heap of ruins. I could see the Spanish conqueror coming back with fresh troops to spread death and destruction through all Anahuac.

And so I understood the horror of it all, the madness, the desire for revenge that outlived the centuries, and wondered if the glory of conquest was worth the price, and if that vengeance which was even now reaching into the modern City of Mexico was justified.

For Mexico City, to the Aztec of Tenochtitlan, would be a symbol of the golden glory he had lost to ancestors of these very people who trod the newer city's streets.

WHEN I AWOKE IN MY HOTEL ROOM it was almost midday. I had fallen asleep with my clothes on, just exactly as I had stood to give my orders to "Alvarado"—with one difference in detail. Upon my feet I wore those sandals with the golden soles!

Even then I suppose I should have slept on, had it not been that the manager of the hotel, more frightened by far than he had been when last I saw him, stood over me and shook me. He had been shaking me for many minutes, his fear mounting as the moments fled, for perspiration was all over his ashen face.

"Wake up," he begged. "Wake up, for the love of God!"

I arose to a sitting position, tired and sleepy. I hadn't slept, really slept, in many hours. "What is it, Don Julio?" I asked.

"You sent us out last night," he quavered, "to bring to you the mon-

ster in the white robe and headdress of plumes. The half-wit girl who called herself Maria de Estrada led us right to him. We saw him, went and stood close to him, commanding him to surrender. He made no reply. He merely *looked* at us, and our blood turned to water—save only that of the half-wit girl. She ran to him, both hands upraised as though she poised a broadsword to slash the man in twain. As she approached the eyes of the monster stared straight into hers, and only his eyes were visible, like candles all but hidden in deepest of sockets.

"He held his white robe high about his face, as though to prevent recognition—as if one could forget, ever, the man in square *tutualli* and *pamuche* of plumes! But as the maddened half-wit girl came close to him, and he retreated not a single step, he dropped his mantle from his lace, and, as God is my witness, it was not a face we saw—but a grinning human skull! And the finger he pointed at Maria was bare of flesh, as was the arm protruding from the square *tutualli*! Only his eyes were alive, redly glowing within the depths of skull."

Don Julio paused in his mad narrative, and his breathing came harshly from his gasping lips.

"And then?" I prompted.

"And then there came out of his grinning mouth a stream of words which I shall never forget—and he called the girl by the name which she gave you. 'Back, Maria, for there is none in all the earth who can deny the Aztec gods their vengeance! Back, if you would save your foolish life!' Maria paused a moment, but I doubt if, mad as she was, she noticed that his face was but a grinning skull, and his hands were fleshless bones of a skeleton. She took one step, even while his arm was still raised, pointing at her—and before her advancing foot touched the ground, the half-wit girl fell as though she had been struck. She spun about on her one foot, to fall, face downward, with her head toward us.

"We would have fled, but we were courageous even in our fear. We strode to the girl and turned her over on her back. She had been dead but a single instant, yet there emanated from her the dank, fetid odor of a charnel house that has been long unopened! It was an odor like that which came into the hotel with you that evening when you brought with you the mad stranger in the white robe and headdress of plumes! As we looked down at her her face became mottled—a dead black face in which brown, unhealthy spots began to form, spots like huge and ugly freckles! We left her there, for there was nothing we could do, *senor*, and came back to you—and I have tried for half an hour to waken you!"

Don Julio straightened as I slipped from my bed, seeking my shoes. As I put them on, hurling the golden-soled sandals from me, the manager of the hotel looked all about him, his nostrils twitching.

"It is here!" he burst out suddenly. "It is here in this room!"

"What is here?" I demanded harshly, my heart sinking even lower than before.

"That odor," he said, trembling, "that odor which clung to the newly-dead body of Dominga Tatis! Can't you detect it, like a breath from an aged tomb?"

I shivered. Well I knew that odor. I had experienced it when my treasure house had been opened; I had known it when, from the *teocalli* of my dreams, I had gazed across the ravaged ruins of Tenochtitlan after Cortes had made his escape to Popotla, leaving the piles of Aztec dead behind him. It was the odor of decaying human flesh. I had known the odor when I had been a medico in France; but the odor here was different, somehow, as though the dead had been longer dead. Yet just a trace it was, like the lingering odor of perfume. Like an intangible something which hovered in the corner of my room, invisible, yet reaching fingers of decay outward to touch us all. I shook myself violently.

"Where," I asked Don Julio, "is Guatemozin? Where was he when you found him, and Maria died? That is nonsense about the grinning skull, the fleshless arms and hands; you dreamed it all. Guatemozin is as much alive as I am. Dominga Tatis was a half-wit, and probably subject to fits. She had one of them, induced by fright, and it killed her."

"But those spots on her face!" persisted Julio.

"You were so badly scared that your imagination ran away with you, Don Julio," I said, and tried to smile, though something inside me said that I lied. "But answer my questions."

"Where the madman is now, I know not. But we found him in the huge marketplace at the edge of the city, where traders from the hill country, having come in early to get the morning trade, were sleeping near their stalls and among their produce."

"And what was he doing when you found him?"

"He was stalking in silence among them, stooping over each of the sleepers, as though he scanned their faces to see if he knew them."

"God! And you did not try to stop him?"

"What harm did he do? He touched not one of them — and I have told you what happened when we tried to take him."

"But you were armed, Don Julio. Why did you not shoot him?"

Here a quiver shook the frame of Don Julio. "I tried, *senor*," he said,

and his eyes grew big with fright. He gulped spasmodically, unable for a moment to go on.

"Yes?" I encouraged.

"I was aiming straight at his eyes," said Julio, "and I am accorded a good shot. Had I fired I must certainly have slain him."

"But you didn't fire?"

Don Julio nodded his head. "I fired," he said dully, "and, as God is my witness, the bullet never left the muzzle of my piece. It must have exploded, for the force of it almost tore my arm from my body, and when I looked at my hand it was empty. The pistol had burst with the explosion and its pieces scattered to the four winds, and my hand was bleeding where a bit of metal had slashed it. Only the Virgin Mary must have saved me utterly from destruction."

"And the fact that your weapon burst must have filled you with such a superstitious fear of the mad Guatemozin that you fancied all sorts of things: the grinning skull, the fleshless arms, the huge brown spots on the face of Dominga Tatis."

"No!" He all but shouted it. "I did not fire until we were fleeing from the market-place, after Dominga had fallen, I turned to look back. The madman was standing as he had stood to watch us approach, arms folded, square robe all but hiding his face. Uncontrollable anger brought me to pause, so that I knelt on the sidewalk, rested my elbow on my knee, and fired—and my weapon vanished from my hand as though I had never held it!"

"And now you think that the madman cannot be slain with bullets."

"I know it."

Three words, spoken with conviction, told me that Don Julio *did* know it, and that I was a fool if I insisted on branding his statement false.

"But there must be some way, Don Julio," I said, "for I tell you that, as sure as Mexico has risen from the ashes of Tenochtitlan, your city's inhabitants are doomed if we do not slay Guatemozin!"

"But how, *senor*, how?"

Then I lifted my hand and made a vow. "I shall slay Guatemozin. I promise you, Julio, that I shall never sleep again until this madman, for whose coming I know myself responsible, is no more. He is to blame, and only his death will keep the people of Mexico City from going the way of Dominga—and those who slept in the market-place!"

"And those who slept in the market-place," gasped Julio, "you think . . ."



"I know," I said gently; "else why was the madman there at all? Tell me, Julio, what sort of people come to the market-place to peddle their wares?"

"Peons," he retorted, "most of them Indians from the hills."

"And Cortes came into Tenochtitlan with his Tlascalcan warriors at his back," I said half-aloud to myself, "and with them were members of many other Indian tribes who had been enemies of the Aztecs for centuries."

"I do not understand you," said Julio.

"No need, Don Julio," I retorted, "you have enough to worry about as it is. I was just thinking, though, that the Aztecs had their Indian enemies to thank for the destruction of Tenochtitlan as much as the Conquistadores, and that wholesale vengeance must of necessity include the descendants of those self-same Indians, of whom the Tlascalans were the chief offenders."

I donned my clothes, jammed an automatic in a pocket and hurried from the room.

"I am going, Don Julio," I said, "and if I do not return before midnight tonight, take a few of your friends to the spot beyond Chapultepec where I was excavating some of the ruins of old Tenochtitlan—and fill the cleft with the debris you will find at the mouth of the openings."

I did not look behind me to see whether he had understood. I knew that my words must have filled him with amazement, must have added to his superstitious fear, the sum total of which was already almost beyond his power to bear.

Then I found myself on the street. I knew where to look for the market-place about which Don Julio had told me, and turned my feet in that direction. I lowered my head as I strode along, seeking to cover my mouth with the lapels of my coat—for the odor I had encountered in the tomb of Guatemozin seemed now to hover over all of Mexico City, like a ghastly pall, invisible, yet almost tangible. The black clouds of yesterday still hid the sun, and a wraithlike mist, such as that which rises from heated pavements after a soaking rain, made all the houses on either hand seem dim and indistinct. Yet the mist seemed to be without substance. It swirled over everything, and its breath was that odor of the tomb; yet the mist was not one of dampness. It was more like drifting smoke; yet I knew it was not smoke. I didn't know what it was, save that it was one of the weapons of Guatemozin, whom I was seeking.

I came to the market-place after a while, and found that here the smoky mist hung thickest. It hung over everything, blotting out all view. Dread such as I had never known possessed me. I hesitated, wondering whether to investigate the horror which I knew the mists kept hidden from the sight of man. No sound came from the market-place, though it was near noon, and the place should have been a bedlam of chattering tongues.

Silence of the tomb hung over the place. I gripped my automatic, knowing even as I did so that any weapon was useless, and shut my eyes as, head down, I started into the creeping mist.

I stumbled and fell, and knew that my feet had come in contact with a human body. I knew this even before I found the courage to open my eyes and look. For there came to my nostrils, from near at hand, that fetid odor, speaking of long-dead and buried mortality.

I opened my eyes and looked, and screamed in spite of all I could do to keep silent—screamed again and again, in insane frenzy! For Don Julio had spoken the truth! Before me, in the person of the dead halfwit, Dominga Tatis, who had told me in her trance that she was Maris de Estrada, I saw the proof of the mad story.

A black face, whose flesh now was stretched tightly over the bones of the skull, so tightly that the lips were drawn back in a mad grimace. A black face which was mottled to the roots of the hair, and down to where the flesh vanished into the sleazy clothing of the dead negress, with brownish, disfiguring blot—like huge, cankerous freckles!

I drew my automatic and, stooping as I rested on my knees beside the hideous body of the half-wit, I strove to pierce the gloom with smarting eyes, but to no avail.

Weary, so numbed with fear and horror that I scarce could place one foot before the other, I rose from the body of Dominga Tatis, and strode into the mists. I sought that part of the market-place where I knew the marketers had been sleeping when Don Julio and his men had discovered Guatemozin.

And as I reached that portion the smoky mist lifted for a few moments, as though my coming had been a signal to an invisible someone, and a ghostly hand had drawn back the mist-curtain so that I might see.

And before my eyes, startling me even though I had known what I would find, reposed dead marketers who had gone to sleep to await the morning's trade! Here, beside little heaps of beans, little piles of corn and rice, and other piles of corn and rice, other piles of unrefined sugar, was a bedraggled woman gone to sleep forever. A dead baby

was at her lifeless breast. Her hands clasped even in death about her baby, were mottled with those great blots I had already seen on the face of the half-wit! Her face was mottled, too, and the skin was as taut as the head of the Aztec war drum, drawing her lips back from her tight-closed teeth in an eternal grimace.

But why continue? Why go into all the hideous details of this slaughter of the innocent marketers—innocent save that they were, some of them, descended from a mingling of the blood of the Conquistadores with the blood of Tlascalans and other Indians who had revolted against the power of the vanished Aztecs?

Within the confines of that market-place, among the empty stalls, under the counters intended as repositories for country produce, I counted two hundred dead—men, women, and children—peons all, from the distant hills beyond Mexico City. The face of each and every one of them was mottled with the touch of that strange plague which had come into the city with the opening—by me, God help me!—of the tomb of Guatemozin.

Guatemozin . . .

Great God! He was the plague! He was the heart and soul of the plague, this madman who called himself Guatemozin—and he had but to show his face to living men to tell them where they stood, with those mottled splotches already showing on their faces as they fell! A grim visitant, this creature from the past, who stalked unhindered through the silent streets of the stricken city. I must find and slay him! If I could not slay him I must, somehow, bear him back to the tomb whence I had released him, and seal the mouth of his sarcophagus.

"You cannot do it," said a voice within me, "you released me from bondage, true, but no man that lives can bind me now and make me captive, ever—until the Aztecs have had their vengeance, and Huitzilopochtli has had his opportunity, denied him these four centuries, to take his place again before the stone of sacrifice and await the baring of the steaming hearts of his age-long enemies!"

I heard the words, within me as I have said; yet I myself had not spoken. As surely as though I had actually seen him, I knew that Guatemozin, who bore me no ill-will, watched me from the shadows.

I stiffened, and the short hair at the base of my skull rustled erect. I drew my weapon and pointed it at the wall of mist that hedged me in. Something told me that I did not aim in the right place.

"I am here, friend," it whispered, "shoot if you desire proof of the truth of what I say."

I could hear no words, as I say; but I *knew*.

I whirled toward the place whence the sound had *not* come, leveled the automatic and fired.

I fell back on my hips with the force of the explosion, and the weapon vanished from my hand. The bullet had exploded at the weapon's muzzle, and the automatic had been broken into a thousand fragments! My whole right arm was numb with the force of the explosion, and my ears rang with the sound; yet, miraculously, I was but little hurt, aside from the shock.

I jumped to my feet and darted toward the wall of mist. I entered it, and knew that just ahead of me, always invisible, stalked the man in square *ábmali* and *panache* of plumes.

Now and again I paused, and knew not why—save that the stalker must have paused, too, and I did not really care to overtake him. And when I moved on at last, knowing deep within me that the stalker moved ahead, lamentations, the lamentations of Latin Americans who screamed their frenzy over their dead, rose from the shuttered houses about me.

And I knew that the bronze death-angel of Tenochtitlan had paused in his stalking retreat to touch those shuttered homes with the plague of which he was the essence—had paused to touch them and, passing on, had left yet other mortled dead behind him.

But still I followed, nor knew when the stalker turned aside, putting me off the trail.

I came to myself out of my waking dream, stunned and bewildered, at the lip of the cleft in the soil beyond the outskirts of the city, which place I had not visited, save in nightmares, since I had looked back on that never-to-be-forgotten evening to discover Guatemozin in his Aztec regalia hovering near the tomb.

I was here, now, and intended to enter the tomb to see if I might not find there the solution to the problem that was driving me insane. But I found myself unable to enter, or even to stand at the lip of the cleft and peer into the depths, where the smoke mist through which I had passed in the city lay like a white pool far below me, masking the opening to the tomb.

But I could not enter, for out of the cleft, like a wall through which I could not force my way, swept that fetid odor, dank and cold as the breath from a tomb—which it was. And, still like a wall that moved, ponderous and invincible, the odor moved over me and through me, and was swept away on a wind I could not feel, like a voiceless hurricane—bearing straight and true toward the Capital City of Mexico!

Just for an instant, before I ran, the white mists at the bottom of the cleft parted, and through them I could see the familiar opening, with the hieroglyphs about it everywhere; I could peer deeply into the opening. There, standing in all its hideous solemnity on the block of stone which should have held the sarcophagus of Guatemozin, reposed the gross figure of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of war!

All about him were motionless shapes, hideous shapes, formless, yet significant . . .

But the mists closed down again, the odor increased moment by moment in volume, and I could not be sure that I had really seen the horror I knew was there.

Starvation had set its terrible seal upon Tenochtitlan. This time, and without surprise at the swift transition which had occurred as I was retreating from the tomb of Guatemozin whereswield the mists, I watched it all from a convenient *azotea*, almost in the heart of the city. The streets of the ancient city were crowded with gaunt and hopeless Aztecs, with scarce a leader of renown and ability left among them. Alvarado and his butchers had cut down the flower of Aztec nobility at the crest of the *teocalli* of Ahuizotl; Montezuma had been a prisoner of the Great Captain, and had died in bondage, giving his three fair daughters into the hands of Cortes. I wondered what had become of the women, and if Cortes kept faith with the vanquished chieftain . . .

Tenochtitlan was in a sad and sorry plight, and through all the sadness, warp and woof of it, throbbed the beating of the drum of calamity. The dead who had died foodless lay thickly in the streets, and those who were left to live, and face the returning Spaniards, were too weak to bury those who had fallen.

Yet the Aztecs still were undaunted, unafraid — though Cortes, with his Indian allies at his back, was already at the gates of Tenochtitlan. He had come to collect his pound of flesh for the horror which had been his during the never-to-be-forgotten night called *la noche triste*.

He had come back, as he had promised he would do, to "make of the city a heap of ruins."

And, save for Guatemozin, there was no prince left among them to lead the Aztecs.

Cortes obtained his memorable interview with the principal chiefs, who told him that Guatemozin would die, and all his Aztecs with him, before he would surrender to the white invaders.

But still Cortes waited, hoping that Guatemozin would change his mind, until the rumor came that Guatemozin and his nobles yet left

alive were planning their escape in *piraguas* and canoes moored along the canals and waterways. It was then Cortes took his position on the *azotea* upon which I stood, and made his dispositions for the final attack.

What a pitiful sight was all Tenochtitlan when Cortes began his mission of revenge! The streets were filled with the starving and the sick, huddled together without formation or design—men, women and children together, like sheep who huddle together for warmth, turning their backs to the blizzard—save that the Aztecs, defying their enemy to the very last, did not turn their backs.

The Spaniards approached within bowshot, and the Aztecs, with trembling fingers that scarce had strength enough to loose their arrows, sent an impotent shower of missiles toward the approaching foe-man. The arrows fell short, or had been shot so weakly that the armor of the Spaniards deflected them with ease.

The discharge of a single arquebus was the signal for the dreadful slaughter.

The sound of the arquebus had scarce died away when the wailing sound which hovered over Tenochtitlan was drowned in the peal after peal of heavy ordnance, the rattle of firearms, as the leaden hail of the Spaniards poured into the unresisting ranks of the disordered Aztecs. The Indian allies of the Spaniards hurled themselves ahead of their white leaders, leaping upon their traditional enemies with weapons bared, with no thought of giving quarter to anyone of the hated Aztec nation.

That slaughter was more than human flesh could bear; yet the Indian allies of the Spaniards had just begun. The Aztecs, who had lorded it over them for untold centuries, had been given into their hands, and they were finding sweet the gory fruits of vengeance. The Tlascalans were safe, for the Aztecs were too weak to offer more than passive resistance, and the Indian allies cut them down with ease.

Scarce an Aztec man in all that city's thousands begged for quarter—though near the last, when even the women who had faith in their warriors saw that there could be but one end to the slaughter, there were a few, and the women began to cry out to save their lives. But the swords and lances cut them down.

When a staunch *piragua* dashed out into the waters of the canal near the *azotea* upon which I stood, I caught a glimpse of a stately figure in its stern. For a moment the man's face was toward me—and I started in amazement, forgetting for a moment that I was but seeing a thing that had been history these four hundred years.

Guatemozin! The same Guatemozin, albeit a trifle younger, whom I had last seen in my own hotel room, garbed in the vestments of modern man. But here, striving to escape with his nobles in his *piragua*, he wore his square *tlimacalli* of finest cotton, now stained with blood, and ragged because the swords of his enemy had touched him here and there, tearing his clothing, and his *parache* of greenish plumes floated out behind him as the oars of his rowers took him moment by moment nearer safety. Even here he scorned to hide behind disguise, just as his mad counterpart in my hotel room had scorned the vestments of the modern man—and his face held nothing but scorn and hatred for his white-skinned enemy as he looked behind him.

When another *piragua* darted in pursuit I knew that Garcia Holquin was playing his part in history, and heading out to prevent the escape of Guatemozin. But the warrior, armed with buckler and *macuahuitl*, faced his enemies, holding his buckler to the fore, poising his gruesome weapon to beat off the attackers. It was not Guatemozin who cried for quarter, but his nobles who were with him. They begged the Spaniards, when the latter leveled their murderous cross-bows, not to shoot, but to spare the life of Guatemozin. And the words of the young warrior came across to where I stood on the *azotea*, clear as a bell, in a speech that, for me, was filled thrice over with deep significance:

"I am Guatemozin. Lead me to Malinche. I am his prisoner; but let no harm come to my wife and my followers."

And so, with the capture of Guatemozin, fell Tenochtitlan as though the fighting Aztecs had lost heart at last, which they hadn't. Had the bronze-skinned prince commanded they would have fought on until the last of them had fallen. This I know, for whether or not it was a dream in which I saw them, I yet could read the hatred in the faces of those who surrendered at last—and I see it now as I write, and know that I speak truth. The Aztecs surrendered only because surrender seemed to be the desire of their only surviving chieftain of any rank—Guatemozin.

Horror gripped me as I gazed about me, for Tenochtitlan resembled a vast battlefield upon which the vanquished had fallen to the last man. Only the honored dead were left of all the Aztecs when the pitiful remnant, fulfilling the terms of the surrender, departed forever from Tenochtitlan. I saw them pass, staggering, weak with hunger, along the lanes which led through their dead, and their heads still were proudly erect, and the last glances they cast behind them from their deep sunken eyes,

were filled with hatred unquenchable for those who had despoiled them—a hatred that would outlast all eternity.

Guatemozin was the last I saw of all the sorry company, and just before the weary marchers passed from view, heading slowly toward the open country, the proud prince turned for a last look at the city of his nativity, and shook his fist at the Spaniards!

And a smoky mist came out of the west, blanketing the sun, to roll like a fog through the ravished streets of Tenochtitlan, hiding from view, with nature's mercy, the bodies of the dead. But all the mists of all the mists of all the heavens could not blot the page of memory, nor dissolve the fetid odor which possessed Tenochtitlan. There had been lapse of time before the odors came, I knew, but I marked it not . . .

For the Visitant, I knew, intended to demand a life for a life—and to take when his voiceless demands were refused.

The smoky mists which hung over Tenochtitlan grew heavier, piled higher in the ravished streets, until they hid from view the whole of the Aztec Capital, muffled even the hoofs of the horses of the Conquistadores.

Suddenly, through the mists, out of the streets that now were invisible, came the sound of lamentations, and the lamentations were the lamentations of Latin American women who wept their heartbreaking sorrow over their beloved dead!

And out of the smoky mists, rising as if by magic from the ruins of Tenochtitlan, rose the Mexico City of today, coming into view like some ghostly city, building itself piece by piece, as though self-created, as a picture grows upon a screen!

Yet there was a single detail in which the two cities were the same!

For the dead lay thick in the streets of both of them—bronze-skinned dead in the streets of Tenochtitlan, every color between white and black in the City of Mexico!

Then Tenochtitlan was gone in its entirety, and only the City of Mexico remained, with its dead, and the wailing of people I must yet attempt to save filling all the world with terror and dismay.

And I?

For I was thinking of many things, foremost of which was that the people of the City of Mexico were not to blame. No matter how fiercely burned the fires of vengeance in the breast of Guatemozin the Visitant, it was my duty, since I had released him from bondage, to save the City of Mexico from the horror which their ancestors had visited upon helpless Tenochtitlan.



I was being borne along *Calle del Puente de Alvarado* by a squad of Mexican soldiers, and when I questioned them they told me they had found me unconscious, my face mottled by plague splotches such as now were known throughout the Capital City!

They were not afraid to touch me, they explained, because they knew that escape from the plague was impossible in any case, and that sooner or later they must fall before it, no matter what they did.

"You are brave men," I babbled, "and I shall remember—and try to save you with the rest."

EVEN NOW I TRIED TO TELL MYSELF that there was a scientific explanation for the evil which had fallen over the Capital City of Mexico. I closed my eyes to the fact that my dreams had been always so vivid that they had seemed not dreams but stark reality. And when reason told me that this was impossible I blamed my nightmares on the dread disease which had come out into God's sunshine with the opening of the tomb of Guatemozin. A weird and hellish vengeance, this terrible plague of the brown spots on the bodies of the dead . . .

One who had planned his vengeance for four hundred years could not have produced vengeance more hideous!

The hotel manager came to me. I will not attempt to explain his appearance, save that he had aged a half a hundred years since I had last seen him.

"It is a miracle, friend," he said hoarsely. "You were stricken grievously, yet you live."

"It is an omen, Don Julio," I replied weakly, "an omen of good. I shall yet do something to halt the horror which rages rampant through all the country."

"But how, friend, how?" he whispered bitterly.

I did not at the moment attempt to answer him. I was thinking what I should do, and realizing that, innocent as I had been of any wrongdoing when I had opened the tomb of Guatemozin, it had still been my action which had brought catastrophe to Mexico City. Yet how could I stay Guatemozin now, whose power for horrible revenge seemed to increase as the hours sped?

Then it came to me, though not as clearly as it came later. It was just an idea at first, an idea that caused me to shudder as though my flesh had been touched by the icy hand of a corpse.

"Don Julio," I said at length, "I think there is yet a way."

I paused for a moment, studying Don Julio. I had no doubt of his courage. He was afraid, true; but he was able to carry on and override his fear.

"Don Julio," I continued, "will you go with me to the tomb of Guatemozin and help me?"

"Yes. But why to the tomb of Guatemozin?"

"Because the horror which hovers over Mexico comes out of that tomb! And I am the guilty one who broke the seals!"

"But-but," stammered Don Julio, "I am not quite sure that I understand."

He didn't, but when I mentioned the word tomb his whole face tightened, until the flesh drawn back from his teeth, so that he seemed to snarl at me. Fear such as I believed no one capable of harboring had taken possession of him — and he seemed to shrink, little and wizened, as though decade or two had fallen upon his already sagging shoulders. Yet the will of the indomitable little man showed through his natural fear, and his answer came softly, as if from an incredible distance.

"For Mexico," he said, "I will try whatever you believe proper. Great God, friend, what can I do? My father is dead, and he was an old man, old and feeble, and my mother already has followed him. I have not gone to the rooms of my wife for two days, because I know, from the silence which comes through the closed door of our rooms, that there is nothing now that I can do. I haven't the courage to gaze upon my loved ones, if they are marked like others I have seen. This place in which you and I are now the only living inmates has suffered with the rest, and the silence of death has made of this place a darksome tomb. Yes, Friend, lead on, and I will follow."

"Then-listen, Don Julio," I said "I am not strong; I am still very sick, so sick that I should die if I did not know that I had work to do. I am scarce able to put one foot before the other, else I would never ask you to share the abymal horror which I know will face us in the tomb of Guatemozin. I am asking you only because I haven't the power to carry through alone."

And with these words of my dependance on him the great little man seemed to shift some of those decades from his shoulders, so that he looked at me clear-eyed as he made reply.

"I am waiting, Friend, when?"

"Tonight, Don Julio."

"May the guardianship of Mother Mary be over us!" said Don

Julio. "I shall take with me my mother's crucifix, some holy water which I carry in a little vial about my neck—"

"Stop, Julio! We are not dealing with ghosts and familiars, but with a man who is a living fiend. He is but one man after all, and has only succeeded in slaying so many because of the plague which is in his touch. We merely go to his tomb to wait his coming, when we will set upon him, both of us, and slay him."

We started from the hotel, our mouths covered with cloths because of the pestilential odors which filled all the city streets, and even as we walked along through the dusk Don Julio made protest.

"One man, did you say, friend? One man? Could one man have stolen the statue of the Aztec god of war from the *Museo Nacional* and borne it away—unless he were able to evoke the aid of discredited and terrible gods? No, friend, no one man could have borne away the image of the hideous god whose followers have vanished from the earth."

A shiver of fear—or was it my terrible sickness?—caused me to stagger as we walked along through the gathering darkness, through that smoky mist which caressed us now like icy fingers, seeking us everywhere through our clothing. For I was remembering again.

That white mist at the bottom of the fateful excavation; how it had spread away to right and left to give me a glimpse of the hideous figure of Huitzilopochtli upon the pedestal which should have held the sarcophagus of Guatemozin!

But I knew the vision had been a dream. Else how could I have seen that figure on the pedestal, when a long winding stairway led down to it from the excavation, so that it was impossible to see the interior of the tomb from above? But then, it had been a dream—or had it?—in which I had traversed that circular stairway!

No matter, we would soon know. Though it came forcibly home to me that I had never penetrated the tomb in my nightmares, and then but once.

Darkness had completely fallen when we stood at the lip of the cleft and looked down, into other darkness impenetrable, with just a suggestion of white, like drifting smoke, far below us.

"Come, Don Julio," I said, "for hesitation may steal our courage."

I slid down the side of the cleft, and was relieved when a clatter of rubble went with me. This, at least, was not a dream, and I was a corporeal being. I looked back at Don Julio where he stood, and saw him hesitate, to make the sign of the cross before he sprang down beside me, slipping to his knees with the force of the fall. He jumped up to

gaze wildly about him at our mysterious surroundings; he looked upward whence he had just leaped, where the black motionless clouds which had hovered over all the country since the release of Guatemozin still hid the moon and the stars.

I seized his hand, and, forcing him to stoop low, dove into the opening.

And our feet, whose tread sounded hollowly in the confined space, encountered the first steps of a stairway!

It was circular, too, as it had been in my dreams. The breathing of Don Julio sounded harshly in my ears—or it may have been the thunderous beating of my own heart. But we continued our downward journey into, it seemed, the very bowels of the earth.

We stopped at intervals to listen, and it was during one of these breathless, nerve-destroying halts that the idea for which I had been groping struck me with the force of a blow, and proved to me that instinct had served me faithfully in bringing me to this place.

"Don Julio," I whispered, "where does the mad Guatemozin go when he is resting from his gruesome labors? What place more fitting than the sarcophagus which held him captive for four centuries?"

Don Julio merely shook his head and did not reply.

It seemed as though countless hours had passed when we came finally to the bottom of the interminable stairway. God! If our plans were to go awry! If we were to be trapped here! We might shout our lungs away and none in the world outside would hear us.

But the world outside was suffering, because of this same tomb I had opened!

That knowledge, and knowledge of the vast courage which had driven Don Julio to follow me here, strengthened me. I wondered how I should have felt had I come to this dreadful place without him.

With Don Julio holding to my wrist with a grip of steel I groped my way to the pedestal I knew rested in the center of this aged tomb. I found it, and my terrible nightmares! For my fingers did not touch the sarcophagus I knew should have been there—and cold metal continued on and upward from the top of the pedestal . . .

I knew that my fingers played over the outlines of the monstrous statue of Huitzilopochtli which had been stolen from the *Museo Nacional*!

Fear did not leave me entirely, but I did regain control of myself somewhat within a second or two after my dread discovery. Still with Don Julio clinging to me like a trusting child I began to circle the pede-

stal, and I stumbled over something solid which rang with the impact of my heavy shoes. I bent to examine this obstruction . . .

I knew that here, below the invisible eyes of the Aztec god of war, reposed the sarcophagus of Guatemozin, with its heavy cover beside it, as though the occupant had just departed and expected to return!

I don't know why I did it, for I must have known what I would find. I groped again over the statue of the hideous god of the Aztecs, seeking the gruesome bowl which, in olden times, had held the steaming hearts of victims of the sacrifice. How many it had held in its time no human being can ever guess. When Thuizotl had finished the great *teocalli* there had been a hecatomb of victims.

My hand, almost against my will, played over the gruesome bowl, and my feeling as I did so was very much indeed like that of a man who dives into inky black water, seeking by sense of touch for someone who had drowned.

Finally my hand came to rest . . .

But horror could do no more. I will only say that I knew where the hearts of those first six who had died had gone, and wondered why the physicians who had performed the autopsies hadn't given their public all the truth!

"Help me, Julio," I whispered.

As nearly as I could judge to be the proper location, and using all our combined strength, which was little enough because of our fear and sickness, we managed to move the sarcophagus of Guatemozin a few feet from the pedestal of the war-god. Then another idea struck me; my pistol had not slain the madman. How could I be sure that he might not escape even as we toppled the statue from its pedestal upon him? We moved the sarcophagus back again, against the pedestal, and I compared the height of the pedestal with the top of the sarcophagus, and prayed that this new mad plan might have some hope of success. One thing was in its favor. Guatemozin, if indeed he ever returned to his tomb, would not discover that his casket had been moved.

Then, after I explained to Don Julio what I intended, we drew back against the wall opposite the stairway to wait.

Where is the man whose imagination will not drive him to the verge of insanity if he is compelled to wait for hours in the deep silence of a tomb? Not even a scurrying rat to vary the monotony—nothing but silence, the odor of decay, of antiquity, and dread of what the hours to come may bring.

A great sigh filled all the darkness. I started and all but screamed,

and felt the hair stand stiffly all along my skull; but it was only the explosive escaping of my bated breath. My cheeks seemed bathed in perspiration, and I mopped them with my hand and shivered. For to touch my face recalled to me those brownish splotches on my cheeks, hidden by the tomb's eternal night time.

"Listen," whispered Don Julio, and his hand at my wrist tightened like the lips of a vise.

"The wind, Don Julio," I made reply, and the echoes emphasized my words.

But we forgot the wind then, and our bodies became as taut as bow-strings.

"You hear?" said Julio. "'Tis the clatter of falling rubble in the excavation!"

"We must hide then," I said, "for if he finds us here, we fail—and there will be two other hearts before the war-god's pedestal."

We glided back to another opening which I remembered from my nightmare—another opening which gave upon another stairway leading further downward. We stepped through, and flung ourselves flat upon the stairs.

"Lie low, Julio," I whispered, "for he will hear the beating of your heart."

But it was my own heart which pounded thunderously a mad tattoo against my straining ribs.

But Don Julio did not question, and just the knowledge that he was below me, and behind, gave me a little more courage.

Then I halted even my breathing, until my lungs were likely to burst, striving to time my throbbing pulses, to synchronize them with the steady sound of gentle footfalls on the winding stairs!

A flickering glow of light was in the tomb, and in its eerie waving I could soon discern the gruesome outlines of the war-god on his aged pedestal. I inched forward and craned my neck to peer upward, to discover that the tomb of Guatemozin was square and that its roof was invisible in the shadows far above. And then, down the stairway which wound about the sides of the terrible place, moving with the stately grace of one who has the power of all the world within his hand, came a weird figure, weird because of the flickering light from a flaming, sputtering torch and the shadow-pictures on the aged walls. The figure was dressed in that costume which I shall never, in this world or the next, be able to erase from the tablets of memory; square *atmalti* of white cotton, and now bedragged *panache* of plumes! And I knew that the

sound of gentle footfalls was caused by the shuffling of golden-soled sandals.

Guatemozin!

He did not hold his robe to hide his face, and I breathed a sign of relief. This much, at least, of the tale Don Julio had once told me, was proved untrue: the head of Guatemozin was not a grinning skull, nor were his hands the hands of a skeleton!

But as he moved moment by moment nearer I knew that we must move farther down our stairway, lest the light of his torch disclose us. Would he come to this opening and peer in before going to his rest? A terrible chance, which would compel us to leap upon this man whom I knew could slay us both with his hands. It must not happen! If I but had my automatic. Then I remembered what had happened to it, and Don Julio answered my unspoken thought by pressing a slender dagger into my hand. I gripped it, and just to touch it gave me fresh courage. I held my place until I could see the face of Guatemozin. There was nothing hideous in it. It was the face of one who is very tired from his labors, and I wondered if, after all, his revenge had been as sweet as he desired.

Then we moved back and held our breath once more. When the light from the torch became motionless I knew that Guatemozin had halted to peer into the terrible face of the god whom he served, and the time of his silent scrutiny, or silent worship, seemed endless.

But the light vanished, and darkness more weighty than before took possession of the tomb; and then there was silence, after a length of time it would have taken a man to compose himself to sleep.

But still we waited—many hours it seemed—listening to his breathing which the echoes brought softly to us.

I reached back at last and touched the shoulders of Don Julio, and found him trembling like a leaf. Like two ghouls we entered that tomb for the last time—heaven willing!—moving like cats on our bare feet, for we had taken time to remove our shoes. We had laid our plans, and I had whispered last directions to Julio. We separated and moved in opposite directions around the great statue. I placed my hands upon the cover of the sarcophagus, and when I felt it quiver slightly I knew that Julio was ready.

"Now!" I shouted.

"Now! Now! Now!" shrieked the echoes. But the wordless shouting of the echoes changed to a reverberating clanging of metal as we lifted the ponderous lid of the sarcophagus and placed it atop the primitive

casket it had sealed for so many centuries. Then we stood upon it, nor could we hear the screams of Guatemozin through the thickness of the cover. It trembled under our feet, however, and we knew that the *thing* below us fought with all his power to break free and gain his freedom—but he failed!

And, straining until our muscles must have stood out like cords, we moved the statue, inch by inch, from the pedestal, until all its weight held prisoner the man we had known as Guatemozin!

Forgetfulness will never be mine, for I feel that I have oceans of blood upon my soul. I fled from Mexico in the middle of the night, because friends and relatives of those who had died were seeking me to take my life, and Dón Julio aided my escape. He promised me when he left me that the excavation I had made would be closed tightly again.

And so I have hidden myself, here in this silent room. It is silent because I cannot bear the sound of voices, which remind me of the lamentations of those who wailed over their dead. But still here is no escape, for the silent room reminds me always of the tomb of Guatemozin.

And there are other things, two of them. The marks on my face—for which reason I refuse to have a mirror in my room. But the other thing is good for my soul, since it is a symbol that it is not good for the mind of man to hold forbidden knowledge.

The other thing?

It rests on my mantelpiece, before me always, as a reminder of a great dread.

A pair of sandals with golden soles!





# It Is Written

The second installment of *The Devil's Bride*, has brought forth a broader spectrum of opinion than did the first; except for a couple of readers who remain staunchly opposed to serials of any sort at all, nearly everyone praised the opening installment.

Noel R. Perkins writes from Syracuse, Kansas: "Quinn's novel is one of the best that I have read in the field; I can hardly wait for the concluding installment. Allett's work is great; more, please. Wollheim's tale was good, up to the final revelation, which was a disappointment; I don't see anything horrifying about a big toe. Your covers have been very good recently; I hope that you will stay with the 'gnarled-tree' type that you are using for the title of the magazine. Finlay's illus are among my favorites, but I would also like to see some more of the work of other illustrators who used to work for *WEIRD TALES*, such as Mori Sudbury, Boris Dolgov, John Giunta, Margaret Brundage, Matt Fox, A. R. Tilburne, and, of course, Hannes Bok. I am curious as to why so few women write in to the letters column; is it that weird fiction is overwhelmingly more appealing to men than to women?"

I have no way of knowing what the proportion between the males and females may be among our readers, though it has seemed throughout the years that more males than females read the magazines. At any rate, even though I know that there are a number of women who read *MOH*, very few of them seem to be interested in writing letters to the editor, even though some tell me personally how much they enjoy the magazines...

I agree—there isn't anything horrible at all about a quivering big toe. That was the whole point: the Wollheim story was a gentle spoof.

David E. Tansuch writes from Midland, Michigan: "Finlay seems to have exclusive possession of *MOH*'s front cover, a state of circumstances that I do not find entirely favorable. Please try someone else occasionally. I did like the —cover."

Our correspondent refers to the May issue (#27). We are experimenting now with some other artists, although this does not mean that we shall never use any further artwork by Mr. Finlay. As this is being typed, Mr. Schmand's cover for the July

issue (#28) has just gone off to the printer, and no decision on the cover which you who read will see has yet been made.

The artists mentioned by Mr. Perkins were indeed worthy, but unfortunately there are difficulties in using their old work which we have not as yet found surmountable.

Daniel Dickinson writes from Flattsburgh, N. Y.: "It is a rare issue that rates two outstandings. The Keller story is even better than *The Oak Tree*, (which I rated 'O'), and the best of his that I've ever read. The Cornwall stories are fairy-tales in their finest form and the best of the genre I've read. I've seen much of Keller's science fiction and weird stories, and none comes close to this. Dr. Keller obviously missed his true calling. The 'Cornwall' stories should be classics.

"The Silverberg story wasn't half as good as the Kelleryarn, but I still had to rate it an 'O'. Mr. Silverberg has very quietly slid into the very top rank of science fiction writers with such stories as *The Masks of Time* and *Nightwings*. I hope to see much more appearing under his name in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* and *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*.

"Despite my rating of *The Devil's Bride*, I am for novels in both MOH and PSF, starting with *The Solitary Hunters*. I would like to see more new material, especially by Silverberg, Lafferty, Zelazny, and Anna Hunger. Contrary to other opinions, Mr. Aletti does but little for me."

John Sinclair writes from Fort Washington, Penna.: "Never having read a horror magazine before, I

was very impressed with *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*. I had thought that all such magazines were junk, but my mind has been changed . . .

"I thought that *The Devil's Bride* was one of the best stories that I have read in my life. It was truly a magnificent story. I can hardly wait to read the last part. *The Sword and the Eagle* followed in my preference. I also thought that this story was well written. I liked the idea of the eagle being a woman. I hope that you have more stories of this type. . . . The reason why I rated *Spawn of Inferno* last is because it is the usual boring type of horror story which I dislike. I hope that you put more pictures in your magazine, but if you do, please find better artists to do them, though I did like the cover picture. If you run great stories like *The Devil's Bride* and *The Sword and the Eagle*, you will keep me buying them."

The majority of the voting readers have urged us to continue to re-run the old illustrations that originally appeared with the old stories we offer, and this we shall do, whenever we can get clean reproduction of reasonably good ones. For a while, the condition of the particular copies we have was such that we did not have any difficulty, but recently we've been running into trouble and have not been able to use some illustrations that we wanted to give you. The difficulty is that some pictures do not come out well upon reduction (as these illustrations have to be reduced to fit our pages) and others are much too dark even in the lightest proofs; when we see camera proofs —shot several times in an attempt to

get a good result—that are still too dark, we sadly discard the picture; it will be even darker in printing.

Charles Hildy writes: "I'm enjoying *The Devil's Bride*, although anticipating was more delicious. The subplots tend to chafe me and the gore is rather more plentiful than I would have thought. In the character Hiji we have the first example—at least in my reading memory—of a smug and sanctimonious sadist. My God, what a monster to be offered up as one of the 'good guys'. He obviously never read the book I spoke of above—nor needed to.

"You've dropped the artist's credit and I would like to rate T. Wyatt Nelson's illustration for *Spawn of Inferno* as an example of the kind of 'grotesque' so successful for depicting weird fiction: The exaggerated top hat, the rubberoid victim, the 'woodcut' technique—all come dangerously close to burlesque, it's true, but skirt that trap and emerge with a more macabre atmosphere than if depicted realistically (Sewell, Wesso, etc.).

"Wollheim's parody was very uninteresting, rather boring. To lift from a man's works only the grim-micks and devices and hang-ups and, in this particular case, omit his vocabulary and involuted writing style and, most important, ambience—this action can hardly be defined as the art of the pastiche. It is so like the hostelry ad-man who take from Dali his deep vistas and androgenous muses and and leave out his art and comment. Look rather to Aletti's *Pietro* of Apono for an example of pastiche—of everyone.

"Silverberg's *At the End of Days* seems to be trying hard—too hard—to sound like folk legend. He should observe Dr. Keller, whose series promises to be something more than these rather bland beginnings. And wouldn't you say Dr. K. had studied James Branch Cabell?"

I agree that *The Horror Out of Lovecraft* was more parody than pastiche, but wonder if you may be taking it more seriously than it was intended. Fond as I am of HPL, it did not strike me at all as offensive, even back in 1944 when I first read

## Are We Invisible?

It's a constant war to try to get **MAGAZINE OF HORROR, STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION,** and **WORLD WIDE ADVENTURE** on to your newsstands—and then keep them appearing there issue after issue. We win on one front, and are pushed back on another.

If you're in an area where we've suffered reverses, so that you don't see us, there is a simple remedy; you'll find it on pages 126 and 128 of this issue.

Note our new address: 140 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

it—no more than Stephen Leacock's hilarious *Maddened by Mystery*, or *The Defective Detective* bothers me, even though I'm an avid Sherlockian.

T. Wyatt Nelson's drawings are one of the reasons why 1932 remains among my favorite years in *WEIRD TALES*. I can still recall the shock of first looking through the November 1932 issue, though, and finding only a single Nelson picture, while the rest of the issue was filled with what I considered to be over-inked scratches. Later, I came to be appreciate Jayem Wilcox's work—or at least some of it—a little more, but he couldn't replace Nelson or Doolin for me.

Richard Grose writes from Dowagiac, Michigan: "I found *The Horror out of Lovecraft* a sheer delight. It is a potent antidote and answer to those who hate Lovecraft without comprehension of the man or his work. Of course, those who scorn him on the basis of hearsay and the like are 'unfortunate', to coin a euphemism.

"HPL was capable of subtle humor. He was too wise to take his own work with deadly seriousness. At the same time, the sincerity he strived for is also present. Examples of his fine-boned satire can be found in the *Selected Letters*.

"I'd like to share a few of my thoughts on literary criticism. As a general rule I feel one should not mix evaluation of the writer as a person with evaluation of his literary productions. In other words, whether or not a specific writer is or was fat or thin, tall or short, a rake or Puritan, Godfearing or atheist, is not relevant

to judging the quality of his stories. I freely admit that HPL's case is an exception since so much of his work is deeply interwoven with himself as a person. However, to judge him on the basis of his beliefs, attitudes, biases, and so forth is totally indefensible ...

"*The Devil's Bride*, part two, confirms my earlier impression that it would have fit the format of the sex and sadism pulps of the thirties. Although I've had no chance to examine examples of this subgenre, it certainly seems to fit the bill. Most of the other de Grandin yarns smack of this, too, to a more or less degree. Flawed by melodrama and bathos, it shocks for a moment, and I might find it mildly interesting if the hack writing didn't keep getting in the way. It's a bit strong for the thirties, but mild compared to what's in print today. I would not be at all surprised that when HPL spoke of 'apertuous Occult detectives' he had a 'a certain little Frenchman' in mind. I fear de Grandin and Co. smacks of the insincerity that HPL found so objectionable.

"Both March and May issues have excellent covers, although, if my college psychology prof. saw the May cover he'd mutter something about oral sadism."

*The Devil's Bride* is, as you put it "a bit strong" for 1932—but not for a few years later. Either in late 1933 or early 1934, I read in *FANTASY MAGAZINE* (the leading fan publication of the time), that *DIME MYSTERY MAGAZINE* (a Popular Publication) was becoming another *WEIRD TALES*, invested in a copy of *DIME MYSTERY* and had my introduction to the sadistic terror or

horror tale. Toward the end of 1934 (the first issue was dated September), the new wave had proven so popular that Popular Publications brought out *TERROR TALES*. At that time, I was in the CCC's and dimes were still scarcer—anyway, this was 15c—but enough of us got copies of his favorite type of magazine so that, with generous loaning, we all had as wide a variety as we wished. Then, at the end of the year, Popular struck again with *HORROR STORIES*, first issue being dated January 1935.

I read them all, although not each and every issue, for several years. To call them *sex and sadism* magazines is tautologous, since sadism assumes a form of sexual expression. The illustrations were as "sexy" as possible—in the sense that the lovely girls being or about to be tortured or mutilated were shown as nearly naked as the publisher dared to let them be. In that respect, some of the artwork was nearly as erotic as the nude photographs in the real "spicy stories" magazines like *TEN STORY BOOK*, *PARIS NIGHTS*, etc.

But in the "spicy story" sense there was no sex in these terror-horror tales at all. And the first thing that impressed me about them, outside of the initial shock value, was how poorly—in fact, how abominably—written most of them were, compared with *Seabury Quinn's* de Grandin stories. 'Tis true that they lacked what I considered even in 1934 as some of the "corn" in Quinn—but I did not consider it anything like a fair exchange. In time, I began to find a few, but very few, exceptions—an occasional story which was fairly well written, and which even had an interesting mystery, as

well as an occasional story which seemed much too good, and should have been in *WEIRD TALES*. But the general rule was the same sort of variety in monotony that you find in de Sade if you read enough of him; and unless you have that sort of taste yourself, the effect is anti-erotic, rather than titillating.

While I did not get to the "divine Marquis" until the last few years, I was fascinated, when I did, at realizing how close the old "sadism" pulps managed to get to de Sade without using the earthy language, which comes out in four-letter Anglo-Saxon words when translated; or again without the tedious philosophy which occupies at least as much space as the action. Eventually, both the Marquis and the "sadism" pulps become a crashing bore.

So I'd recommend that you read some of these old pulps before coming to a final conclusion about whether the de Grandin series belongs in the same subgenre. I say they do not; none of the editors of those pulps would have accepted Quinn's genteel writing or found any of the de Grandin series sadistic enough.

*Pat Miller*, of Lansing, Mich. asks: "I am interested to find out if you originally planned to print *At the End of Days* in *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* but had to print it instead in *MOH* because of a space (no pun intended) problem such as occurred with *R. A. Lafferty's The Ultimate Creature* in *MOH*#18." Mr. Miller's deductions are correct right along the line, but there is one further consideration: Since the Silverberg story was already in type, and an-

## Have You Missed These Issues?

#9, June 1965: *The Night Wire*, H.P. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Sins of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Hagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H.G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

#10, August 1965: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappell Pribrack; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Macabre's Wife*, Kirk MacBain; *Come Closer*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Ryan Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoek; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Yach-Men*, Laurence Manning; *Was it a Dream*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Han Tree*, Katherine Tegen; *The Head of Dr. Betz*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dweller in Dark Valley* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Pool*, Croye la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Munching*, Exorcist, Gordon MacCraith; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M.*, John Stetebach; *The Man in the Dark*, Irvin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A.W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL* (article), Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead.

other issue of *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION* indefinitely postponed, the question was not whether to run it in MOH, but when.

Gloria Lee Placek writes on a preference page: "I think that the best story was *The Horror Out of Lovecraft*, by Donald A. Wollheim. Of course, I may be prejudiced, since I am a long-standing Lovecraft buff.

"Even my Comparative 20th Century Literature professor thinks very highly of HPL. This is striking because otherwise our entire English department deplore science fiction (except Karl Capek, but he, too, is on shaky ground).

"I would like to know Mr. Wollheim's opinion of Colin Wilson's stinging attack upon HPL in his book, *The Strength to Dream*. Such an attack should not go unanswered. Who will speak for HPL?

"My one objection to *The Devil's Bride* was the rather heavy-handed use of ethnic (Slava, Hebrews) types as villains. Of course, owing to the date of first publication, the author was not aware of what real horror can result in exploiting ethnic differences or creating stereotypes . . ."

I haven't read Colin Wilson's book, *The Strength to Dream*, but can tell you that he discusses HPL at length in the long introduction to *The Mind Parasites* (in the Arkham House hardcover edition, at least), and acknowledges that he was too severe with HPL in the earlier book.

The careful reader will note that de Grandin does not consider Hebrews evil as Hebrews, but denounces the Hebrew-type villains among the Satanists as a disgrace to a noble race-unworthy of being called He-

brews or Jews at all. This is very far from racism; and to repeat the gist of my editorial in this issue, it is exactly the same sort of unthinking reaction to cry "racist" at Seabury Quinn, etc., as it is to accept indiscriminately the propaganda of the genuine racists.

Elbert Brewer writes: "I was just getting around to reading the January 1969 issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* the other day and I thought there was something familiar about the title of the James Blish story, *There Shall Be No Darkness*; and checking my library, I found the story in a paperback volume entitled *Zacherly's Vulture Stew* (Ballantine Books, 1962, second printing).

"I sometimes compare different published versions of stories to determine if there are any discrepancies between them, and I did so with MOH'S and the above mentioned book's versions of the Blish story. I discovered that your version had two less numbered divisions than the other, that your version was at least 25% shorter than the other, and that there were many changes in wording.

"Such evidence not only compels me to conclude that you have altered this story without informing your readers of it, but leads one to wonder if you are making a regular practice of this sort of thing . . ."

As we wrote to Mr. Brewer: "There are at least two different versions of James Blish's *There Shall Be No Darkness*. The story was revised and expanded for the 'Twayne Triplet' entitled *Witches Three*, and I believe

that this is the version which you read in the *Zacherly's Vulture Stew* pocketbook.

"I used the original magazine text, from the April 1960 issue of *THRILLING WONDER STORIES*, so this would account for all the differences you noted that were not the result of misprints . . . except for one word. With the author's approval, I deleted the word 'grim' before the word 'necessity' in one spot . . .

"In fact, the Twayne-Zacherly edition is a different story; although it contains substantially, though not literally, all the material that was in the original magazine version. Since I noted the source, there was no need to tell the reader that other versions of the story exist."

Mr. Brewer also asked about differences between the MOH and the Arkham House edition of Henry S. Whitehead's *Cassius*. I have not read the Arkham House edition, but worked from the original magazine text in *STRANGE TALES*. At the time I replied to Mr. Brewer, I had forgotten, but reading the Lupoff book and writing the editorial for this issue reminded me: It is possible that I did make a slight cut or two of material not essential to the story which seemed to me to be of such a nature as to give needless offense.

While I will stand by the principle of this, as I said in the editorial, there is one aspect of it, in practice, where I can sympathize with Mr. Lupoff entirely: for I wonder sometimes, after the event, whether I was being over-scrupulous in a particular instance.

But this can be applied to *all* editing.

## Have You Missed These Issues?

#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scott; *Devils Madam*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Horridly*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Nightmares*, Anna Renger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Lair of Star-Spawn*, Derleth & Schorer; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now The Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Moth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel Defoe; *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster-God of Menemith*, Edmund Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Barker; *Lilies*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flax*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Dream of London*, Robert Barr; *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Level; *Lacerus*, Leonid Andreyev; *Mr. October*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog That Laughed*, Charles Willard Dike; *AA Sweet Youth*, Pauline Kappell Pothoff; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Lafferty; *The London Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#17, Fall 1967: *A Scene of Cruelty*, Robert Edmund Allen; *The Laughing Duke*, Wallace West; *Demond's Bone*, Robert E. Howard; *The Spell of the Sword*, Frank Aubrey; "Williamson", Henry S. Whitehead; *The Curse Of Ameri-Ra*, Victor Rousseau.

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## The Editor's Page

(continued from page 7)

evidence that the reports, or even his own initial first-hand impressions, were either deliberate lies or incorrect.

I submit that a person addicted to racist type thinking simply could not operate this way. There are, of course, degrees of virulence. Some consider that the so-called "inferior" races, peoples, etc., are to be treated fairly—even kindly and with charity—so long as they stay in their place. "Their place", of course, is at the bottom of the scale. The most virulent are those who consider that all members of "inferior" races or people are devils which must be destroyed. Thus the individual member of the inferior race, etc., who does not display the attributes ascribed to him in the racist's creed is even worse of a devil than imagined. If he's intelligent, where the creed says he is stupid, this make him more dangerous; likewise if he is educated, where the creed says he is ignorant. If he shows any admirable traits, where the creed allows him naught but loathsome ones, these are evidence of his inhuman cunning; the racist will not be deceived. We see no sign whatsoever of this syndrome in Tarzan, or in any other Burroughs story that I have read.

Racism can also be considered as stereotype escalated into ideology, or even theology. But there is nothing ideological about Tarzan.

If anything, Tarzan is one of the great anti-racist heroes in popular



fiction. He is constantly doing not only what no racist could possibly do—dealing with people of all sorts and conditions as good, bad, or inbetween as he finds them under the circumstances—but he refuses to identify good or evil with any particular group when it comes down to actual dealings with a person or persons within it. He has his preferences and his biases, in the abstract; in the concrete, he deals with the individual as an individual—not as someone automatically "good" because white, or some other consideration; not as automatically "bad" because black, or some other consideration.

The genuine anti-racist does not make a person's race, or cultural background, etc., the sole basis for judging him as an individual. The phony anti-racist, as we see a good many of them around these days, simply switch devils. It is not—again using Negroes as an example, since this is what we started with—that

writing in such a manner as to present black beautiful is racism. Certainly not. It is when "black is beautiful" is accompanied by "white is vile" that we have phony anti-racism.

In any one Burroughs novel, we are likely to find stereotype "slurs" relating to some people; when you've read them all, you will find that this same people have been praised through the presentation not of a sermon about them but a sympathetic character who is of these people. A genuine racist probably would not like Burroughs, for this very reason; and if a Nazi-type anti-Semite was pleased by the presentation of a Jewish villain in *Tarzan and the Golden Lion*, he would be furious at the presentation of Moses Samuels in *The Moon Maid*. (In fact, after reading the latter, he might decide that ERB was Jewish!)

So much for the contention that ERB was a racist, or that his stories are full of racism. The contention will not bear examination, and when you

## Notice To Collectors

There wasn't space, this time, to list the contents of issues #5, 6, 7, and 8, but we still have these available, though I cannot say how long this will be the case. We are out of issues #1, 2, 3, and 4.

Due to increases in storage and other costs, it has become necessary for us to increase the price of *all* back issues to 60c the copy. Current issues, however, can be obtained from us for the cover price of 50c per copy, during the sales period. We seek no special advantage from the unhappy fact that you may not be able to find the current issue on your local newsstands; while we have been able to increase the coverage somewhat, we know it is very far from good.

We cannot fill orders for less than two copies, so the minimum is either \$1.20 for two back issues or \$1.10 for one current and one back issue.

## Have You Missed These Issues?

#18, November 1967: *In Annals of the Tomb*, John Martin Leahy; *Transit and Immortal*, Jim Haugh; *Out of the Deep*, Robert E. Howard; *The Bibliophile*, Thomas Boyd; *The Ultimate Creature*, R. A. Lafferty; *Wolves of Darkness*, Jack Williamson.

#19, January 1968: *The Red Witch*, Nicolo Dyalhis; *The Last Letter From Norman Underwood*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Jewels of Virena*, Harriet Benson; *The Man From Cincinnati*, Holloway Born; *Ground After*, Anna Hunger; *The Wind In The Rose-Bush*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Last of Macbeth's Wife*, Kirk MacBain; *The Years are as a Knife*, (verse) Robert E. Howard.

#20, March 1968: *The Street of the Snakes*, Arlon Eadie; *The Rack*, G. G. Ketchum; *A Cry From Beyond*, Visper Rousseau; *Only Gone Before*, Emil Peasly; *The Voice*, Nell Kay; *The Monsters*, Murray Leinster.

#21, May 1968: *Kings of the Night*, Robert E. Howard; *The Counting of Private Rogoff*, David A. English; *The Brain-Eaters*, Frank Edlinap Long; *A Psychical Invasion* (part one), Algernon Blackwood; *Masterfile*, Col. S. F. Meek; *The Dark Star*, G. G. Pendarvas.

#22, July 1968: *Worms of the Earth*, Robert E. Howard; *Come, Anna Hunger*; *They Called Him Ghost*, Laurence J. Cahill; *The Phantom 'Riches*, Rudyard Kipling; *The Castle in the Window*, Stefan B. Aleni; *A Psychical Invasion*, (part two), Algernon Blackwood.

hear it made you can be reasonably certain that the claimant has not read very much Burroughs, or has not given the matter any real thought.

The second question, that of censorship, is full of traps.

Just as many people who make the loudest noises about "racism" are really racists at heart—in their actual behavior, so many of those who make the loudest noises about censorship are really censors at heart—they would suppress arguments which favored censorship, for example.

There may actually be people who are 100% opposed to censorship in any form, at any time; after all, I've only met a small percentage of the population of this planet, so I do not know whether such a person or persons exist. All I can tell you, from experience with a large number of people who claimed to be positively opposed to censorship is that at one time or another, or in one way or another, they proved to be very much in favor of it. It was all a question of what was to be censored!

For example, I have yet encountered anyone who is in favor of including instructions for making nitroglycerene in a kid's chemistry set. Or, to broaden the example, anyone who favored spelling out simple methods of murder through the use of materials available in almost anyone's household—stuff not labelled "poison" or normally considered poisonous. (Chemists have assured me that the cryptic references, which you can find in various detective novels, are not fictional.)

Actually, we are dealing with two matters here: restricted circulation of particular printed words and total

# Coming Next Issue

Gradually, Gideon's interest had shifted to the direct study of those about him. He traced down rumors, sought the sources of stories told by isolated farmers in the far-off hills. There were the Indian myths to ponder upon as well incredible legends of creatures who had lurked in the lands to the west and fled at the coming of the whites . . .

Horned entities—creatures with wings and hoofs—cloven footprints found in swamps—giant stags speaking in the voices of men—black beings dancing in forest glens to the sound of drums deep within the earth—these things the savages feared even as Christians did. Such stories fired Gideon with fresh zeal, and more momentous still were the actual reports of specific instances which he gleaned from visitors and hunters who dealt with isolated and half-forgotten settlements.

Here in New England whole villages had mysteriously disappeared, not through famine or Indian attack, but by the simple process of evaporation. One day they existed and the next day nothing remained but a cluster of empty houses. Other communities held dark communion under mid-night moons, and children of neighboring villages were known to have vanished mysteriously just before such occasions. Sometimes a minister reached a neighboring town with an account of his rejection by parishoners in favor of new and secret ways of worship. There was talk of ceremonies in which both white men and savages adored a common altar; of isolated towns grown suddenly and amazingly prosperous in barren wilds.

More dreadful still were the mumbled accounts of strange happenings in isolated graveyards; of open graves, of coffins seemingly burst from within, or graves that were not deep enough for their purpose and of graves that were far too deep, leading to tunnels beneath the earth.

These tales and others of like nature, together with the written testimony he gathered, increased steadily during the year or more of Gideon's investigation. But appeals to authority for the commissioning of a crusade into the hinterlands met with no success. The courts were overburdened with local witchcraft trials. Storm as he might that the evil must be stamped out at its source, Gideon's sermons and appeals fell upon deaf ears. Slowly he realized that he could look for no outside aid in his battle with the Adversary.

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#### Did You Miss These Issues?

#23, September 1968: *The Abyss* (part one), David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Death Mask*, Mrs. H. D. Everett; *One By One*, Richard M. Hodgson; *The Thirteenth Floor*, Douglas M. Doid; *Leapers*, Robert A. W. Lowndes.

#24, November 1968: *Once in a Thousand Years*, Frances Bragg Middleton; *The Eye of Horus*, Stefan B. Alekti; 4 Prose Poems: *Memory*, *What the Moon Brings*, *Nyarlatok*, *Ex Oblivione*, H.F. Lovecraft; *A Diagnosis of Death*, Ambrose Buro; *The Abyss* (part two), David H. Keller, M.D.

#25, January 1969: *There Shall Be No Darkness*, James Blisk; *The Phantom Ship*, Captain Frederick Marrayat; *When Dead Gods Wake*, Victor Rousseau; *The Writings of Elwin Adams*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Colossus of Nourgon*, Clark Ashton Smith.

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suppression of particular printed words. Nonetheless, both do constitute censorship and both are allegedly justified as being "for the good" of the persons from whom these words are withheld. Mr. Lupoff considered that certain material in *Tarzan* and *the Tarzan Twins* should be restricted to adults. Since I am not opposed to censorship under certain conditions, it seems to me to have been a wise decision. But there is one hitch: Is there an uncensored version available for grown-ups?

It may not be important in this particular instance, but the existence and availability of uncensored editions of whatever is an important principle. The censor, unchecked, will seek to destroy uncensored editions entirely; and this is but another example of the problem of power. In order to keep some sort of society which we like running at all, certain people must fill positions in which they have power over other people; and there is no getting away from the fact that all such power corrupts. Up to a point, the corruption is not so great as to outweigh the benefits issuing from the wielding such power. It's partly the question of just where that point is, and what to do when passed, that makes the study of history necessary as well as interesting. (And it is the refusal of most people to study history at all, let alone learn anything from it, that results in history's continuing to be interesting.)

So we have a tension. On the one hand, the desirability of restricting the circulation of some printed words; on the other, the danger of starting something which gets out of control very easily. For the censor-type of



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**Have You Missed These Issues?**

#26, March 1969: *The Devil's Bride* (part one), Seabury Quinn; *The Oak Tree*, David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Milk Carts*, Viola A. Mehley; *Cliffs That Laughed*, R. A. Lafferty; *Night*, James W. Bennett & Soong Kwen-Ling; *The White Dog*, Feodor Sologub.

#27, May 1969: *Spawn of Inferno*, Hugh B. Cave; *The Sword and the Eagle*, David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Horror out of Lovecraft*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Last Work of Pietro of Apono*, Stefan B. Aleni; *At the End of Days*, Robert Silverberg; *The Devil's Bride* (part two), Seabury Quinn.

28, July 1969: *The Nameless Mummy*, Arion Eadie; *Raymond the Golden*, David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Phantom Drug*, A. W. Kapfer; *The Rope*, Robert Grath; *A Revolt of the Gods*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Devil's Bride* (conclusion), Seabury Quinn; *Not Only in Death They Die* (verse), Robert E. Howard.

behavior is self-escalating and self-justifying. If you think in terms of perfection and absolutes, then we have a real dilemma.

The dilemma, however, is not real; it is what is known in logic as a false dilemma. Two alternate propositions are set forth as if these were the only possibilities; actually, the presentation is propaganda, designed to keep you from seeing the fallacy; these are not the only possibilities.

Oliver Cromwell made the statement, "It is not only presumptuous but foolish to deny a man a privilege on the assumption that he may abuse it. When he doth, then forbid." Which seemed to me to be an astonishingly sensible statement from somewhat I had considered an impossible fanatic. And elsewhere you will find the proposition that the abuse of any thing does not impeach its proper use.

Because we need to see that both unrestricted circulation of any words or pictures that anyone wants to print (Are you in favor of the circulation of carefully faked photographs which would seem to prove highly embarrassing and perhaps legally actionable behavior on your part?) and uncontrolled censorship are deadly and could be fatal to our society—or anyone else's.

The alternative which the false dilemma would conceal from us can simply be expressed in two platitudes: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." "There is no liberty without responsibility." Somewhat less platitudinous is the fact—as history has shown—that most people, at most times, do not want to pay the price, and are more than willing to trade liberty for a release from responsi-

bility; so that one of the alternatives of the false dilemma is usually accepted.

Coming down to cases, is there a justification for the posthumous revision of the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, seeing that he is not available to make changes himself? I think there is, because what we read in these unrevised versions shows plainly that Burroughs' intent was to entertain and not to give needless offense in the process. When anti-German sentiments were in the air, so to speak, he had real nasty Prussian villains; when the air had cleared, he presented individuals of German nationality in a sympathetic light. While group defamation appears in almost any novel, most of it can be deleted without changing the story in the slightest; in some instances, a character needs to be changed a little—the accent put upon the person, without respect to the person's race or national cultural background. I see no reason for doubt that ERB would have been entirely willing to make these changes himself.

Some of the alterations that have been made, as Lupoff has noted, amount to swallowing camels while straining out gnats. Reference to a Negro's "black" face is conscientiously deleted in one novel—while his conversation is still presented in "comic ducky" dialect. Here's a character who should have been reworked entirely; the "comic ducky" of the old days presents a needless offense today, and we just don't see him as quite so funny as our grandfathers did. But what we have in this instance is inept censorship.

Careful reading of many of the

oldtime pulp stories indicate that the author's intentions in general were those of entertainment; and the presence of certain material in these stories which was not considered offensive back in the 20s and 30s, but *is* considered offensive today, frustrates these intentions. True, the author expected to get paid—but what he expected to get paid for was entertainment, not ideology. I see no reason for a contemporary editor of such oldtime material not making such changes as will remove any needless offense, even if a little carpentry is involved, so long as the substance of the story is not changed.

There are instances where the offensive matter is truly substantial, and you would wind up with quite a different story were you to make the necessary alterations. In that instance, it would seem to me that the choice would have to be between reprinting as written, or not reprinting at all. I remember a particularly popular story in *WEIRD TALES*, entitled *The Last Horror*. I did not read it in December 1926, when it first appeared, in the January 1927 issue, but in 1938 or 1939—and found it most offensive even then. But it just cannot be toned down; it must be taken or left, and my choice has been to leave it.

The fallacy, then, is the notion that any censorship at all, and in the matter we're discussing, any editorial emendations at all, must inevitably lead to the extreme of total censorship. This is akin to the proposition that a single drink leads invariably to alcoholism, or a single dissent from official government policy leads directly and without stop-over to treason. RAWL

## *Subscription And Back Issue Order Page*

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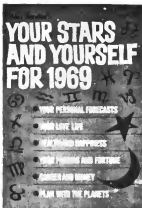
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